GENE WILDER

IN

NEIL SIMON'S

LAUGHTER

ON THE 23RD FLOOR

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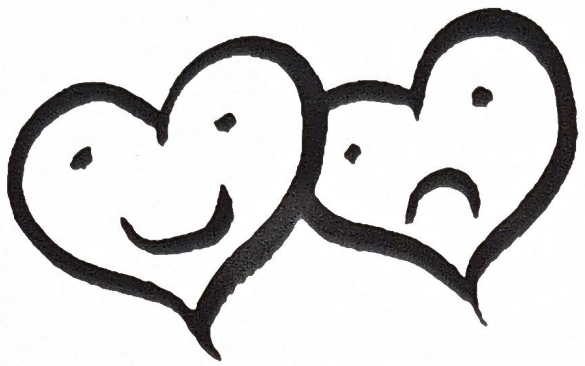

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GENE WILDER

in

NEIL SIMON's LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

with

JOSEPH ALESSI
STEFAN BEDNARCZYK
MARCIA FIRESTEN
REGINA FREEDMAN
LINAL HAFT
MARK JAX
ROLF SAXON
TOBY WHITHOUSE

Directed by
ROGER HAINES

Designer
JUDITH CROFT

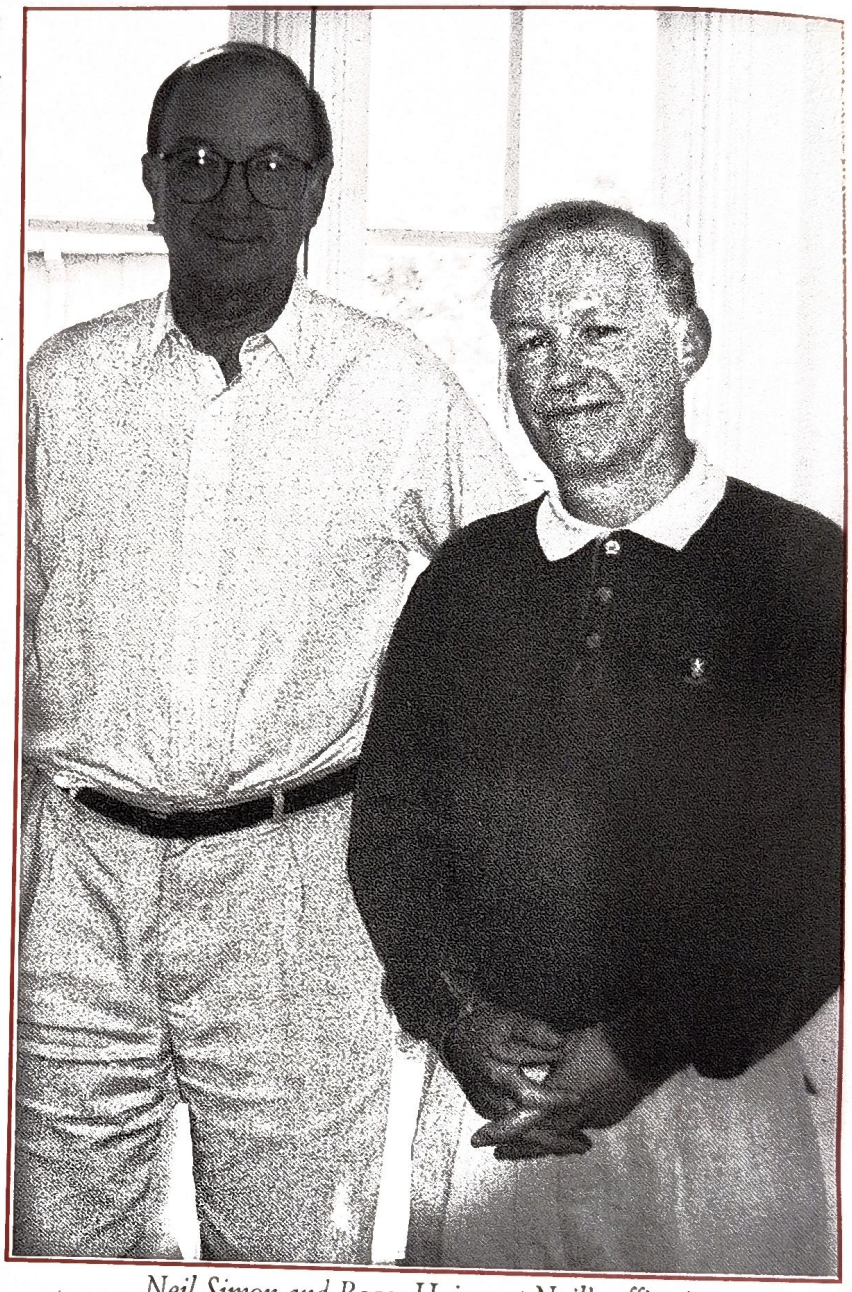
Lighting Designer
NICK RICHINGS

First performance at this theatre 1st October 1996

An Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford Production

Director's Notes

It all started five years ago with *Brighton Beach Memoirs,* this love affair between me and the plays of Neil Simon. Many companies had performed this particular play but as far as we knew nobody had ever done the Trilogy (which includes *Biloxi Blues and Broadway Bound*) sequentially and over two seasons so we at the Manchester Library Theatre decided to do just that. To see Eugene Jerome (Neil Simon himself) develop from spotty teenager *(in Brighton Beach)* to a young man who, with his brother, was off to write comedy in New York *(Broadway Bound)* was joyous. It was like watching a close friend grow up and leave home before your very eyes. It was a sad night - the last night of *Broadway Bound* - the end of the Trilogy and the end of Eugene. In the meantime a new Neil Simon play was being produced on Broadway. We'd gathered that it continued where *Broadway Bound* left off. We immediately applied for the rights. Some eighteen months later, Neil Simon granted us those rights to produce the UK premiere. The play: *Laughter on the 23rd Floor.* And what a humdinger of a play it is. Fast, hard, American, zany, anarchic, Jewish. It depicts the period in the 50s when Neil Simon was one of the team of writers who wrote for the great comedian Sid Caesar. However it isn't quite a follow-on to *Broadway Bound*. Eugene from the Trilogy has now become Lucas and his brother Stan in the Trilogy - Danny in real life, although one of the writers for Sid Caesar, is not depicted at all. This play is an enormous tribute to the other writers (Mel Tolkin, Larry Gelbart, Lucille Kallen, Tony Webster, Sheldon Keller, Mel Brooks) and of course to Sid himself.



Neil Simon and Roger Haines at Neil's office in Los Angeles, June 1995

Neil Simon took the first draft of *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* to Sid Caesar and, because the play depicts the elements which were to contribute to Sid's eventual downfall - namely alcohol and tranquillisers - he was wary of Sid's response. Sid loved it. Sid, who is now in his early 70s, is now completely cured and as Neil Simon, tongue in cheek, said: "My play has revived his career".

However the play, although based on real people, does not call them by name. This is not a play of impersonations or lookalikes. It's a play about a bunch of young hungry writers - could equally be the team who created *That Was The Week That Was* or *Python* or *The Goons* - all trying to outfunny each other with very little room for vulnerability or private lives.

Hope you enjoy *Laughter.*

In 1953, two extraordinary events happened in my life. I got married and I became a writer on *Your Show of Shows* starring Sid Caesar. Both events made me extremely happy. I was 26 years old and on the first day I went to work on the Caesar staff, I was awed by the gifts and talents of the other writers - Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Larry Gelbart, who went on to create *M*A*S*H*, Mel Tolkin, my brother Danny, and a few others. After two years on *Your Show of Shows*, Sid Caesar moved on to have his own show, *Caesar's Hour*, taking most of the writing staff with him. Sid Caesar was big in every way, in his size, in his humour, his appetite, his anger and his love of writers. During this period, America was beseiged by Communist hunters led by Joseph McCarthy and Roy Coohn. Writers, actors, directors and everyone connected with the arts lived in fear of being put on the Blacklist, which made you unemployable in television. The play, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, (our offices were in a high rise building in New York) is a picture that closely resembles the real life that went on in the writers room. Mostly we laughed, talked, argued and ate, anything to put off the inevitable writing. But when we worked, we burned the midnight oil, and sometimes burned the drapes and desktops as well. There is very little exaggeration in the play. There was also great pressure on all of us to deliver on the air, as NBC feared our show was too esoteric, too smart for the new rural audiences who were getting their first TV's. This pressure was mostly felt by Sid Caesar, who began to take tranquillisers and Scotch to calm his nerves. But it never held back his anger in dealing with less than intelligent network executives and threats to America by men like Senator McCarthy.

Notes on Laughter on the 23rd Floor

L-R back row: Neil Simon, Mel Tolkin, Larry Gelbart.
L-R front row: Gary Belkin, Sheldon Keller, Mike Stewart, Mel Brooks

I've always believed humour is fed by conflict. We had our share of both and I hope that *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* will give you an intimate picture and a front row seat as to what went on in the writers' room in the early 50's.

EMPERORS

MAX PRINCE IS

Neil Simon has dipped into autobiographical waters once again to write about his time in the Writers' Roo *Show of Shows*, one of the milestones in American TV comedy. The star of that show was the unique tal Caesar.

Born in Yonkers, New York, Sid's first love was music, playing the clarinet and saxophone well enough t professionally with the Shep Fields and Claude Thornhill orchestras in his late teens. The cultural melti 1920s New York had awoken his gift as a mimic of various dialects, but becoming a comedian was largely ac "*It happened when I was nineteen years old and in the Coast Guard. One day when I was at the canteen in Brook talking to Vernon Duke, the composer, and we decided to form an orchestra for dancers at the base. We got the thre and between the numbers I used to lead around a little, doing imitations and double talk routines. I enjoyed it and audiences seemed to like it. Well, when Vernon was commissioned by the Coast Guard to write a show, he recommended me to the fellow who was going to direct the production. That was Max Liebman.*"

It was a catalyst for Caesar's future career. The show, called *Tars and Spars*, toured for a year. Hollywood decided to film the show with Caesar in it, and he received very positive reviews. However, he only made one further film in the following two years: his particular style was not best suited to the medium. As Neil Simon has said, Sid Caesar was "big in every way". His approach did not suit the minimalist requirements of the big screen. He returned to New York as a club entertainer, Max Liebman helping him to refine his act for the Copacabana. It proved to be an unhappy experience, and Caesar nearly gave up show business. Liebman stepped in again, and his protege took the comedy lead in a Broadway show called *Make Mine Manhattan* which ran for a year. The break into television swiftly followed. Sid Caesar was never someone to rely totally on a team of scriptwriters to provide his laughs. Although he was surrounded by some of the great worldsmiths in American comedy - Neil and Danny Simon, Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks, Larry Gelbart, Woody Allen - his genius lay in using the scripts as a springboard for his talent to improvise and embellish. His own ear for the peculiarities of dialect, the non sequitur and the malapropism was a unique skill amongst his contemporaries. Coupled with an extraordinary ability for the physical realisation of any character (human, animal or inanimate object), this gave his creative team an infinite scope for invention in the most surreal of situations. And Caesar, by a simple act of belief could bring the surreal situation to life. His skill went beyond words: he was equally at home in wordless "pantomime" where his capacity for physical expression was allowed full rein. It expressed itself best by taking a character (or thing!) in a commonplace, recognisable situation and pushing the possibilities of that situation to the extreme. And whatever he played there was always within it a sense of individual resigned to circumstances, world-weary and slightly sarcastic facing the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. If much of this sounds familiar to us, if not from direct contact with Caesar's shows, it is perhaps because his style and format have been much copied over the last forty years in sketch shows on both sides of the Atlantic: elements in Tony Hancock, the Eddie Braben scripts for Morecambe and Wise, *Monty Python* to Rowan Atkinson's Mr Bean character, or Steve Martin's earlier work with Carl Reiner and Robin Williams' manic physicality. In this sense Sid

---

GLOSSARY

TIFFANY'S: An exclusive jewellery store.

ELLIS ISLAND: Ellis Island was the first port of call for immigrants arriving by boat in New York.

YOM KIPPUR: [Pronounced Kipper in America] is the Day of Atonement, the most solemn religious fast of the Jewish year.

COLL COLLECT: To reverse charges on the telephone.

TICK-TOCK-TOK: Thoughts and Guesses.

EDWARD R MURROW: Esteemed television and radio journalist.

THE FIFTH AMENDMENT: An amendment to the US Constitution which states that no person may be compelled to testify against him or herself. ['To take the fifth' means refusing to answer a question on the grounds that it might incriminate oneself]

OF COMEDY

IS SID CAESAR

Caesar's work is not stuck in the time warp of fifties' stereotypes that dates so many of his contemporaries on American TV.

In other ways, though, Caesar has been firmly stuck in the fifties. The sheer volume of material required to maintain the level expected of him in a weekly ninety-minute show took its toll. Such was the voracious appetite of live television that Caesar and his team had to come up with the goods for thirty-nine weeks of the year, eating up more comedy materials in a season than the average vaudevillians would in a lifetime. Bert Lahr, the old revue performer, spoke of Caesar's obligations to the network as "impossible". Bob Hope felt that the public was "being spoiled" and added "How Sid has done what he's done every week I'll never know". There were external forces at work too. The NBC network wanted the show to be "more commercial" and felt that the humour was too much of New York to appeal to their increasing Middle American audience. The other great fear of anyone with even vaguely radical views or associations was being called up in front of The Committee: it was the time of the McCarthy Witchhunts, as they came to be known.

From 1947 to 1954, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, led by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, sought to root out "subversives". Their targets were those with connection to Communism - however tenuous or distant. These individuals were classed a security risk to the very freedom of the people of America. The investigations left no stone unturned in the field of public life, and the world of mass entertainment was not exempt. Hollywood, television, theatre and much of the press fared badly under this paranoid right-wing spotlight. Scripts were often painstakingly examined to make sure they contained nothing that could be seen as in any way offensive to the Committee which put enormous pressure on the industry to play safe. Actors, writers and directors who refused to co-operate, or were believed to have Communist sympathies, were socially and professionally ostracised, fined or incarcerated depending on the severity of their cases. For seven years, the Committee pervaded American life as a self-appointed censor of artistic freedom. It has become as the playwright Arthur Miller wrote, "a permanent kind of thought police".

All these pressures touched Sid Caesar deeply. He started taking tranquillisers and drinking heavily. Yet those around him always maintain that it never affected the high level of professionalism he brought to his work.

The ninety-minute *Show of Shows* was (mercifully for Sid and his team) succeeded by Caesar's Hour in the Mid-fifties, on which Neil Simon also worked as a scriptwriter. By 1958, Sid Caesar's heyday in television had come to an end. He is still working guesting on other TV shows and making odd movie appearances which never find a way of utilising what he has to offer. At his peak though, he laid the foundation for much of the style of the zany American TV shows of the sixties: *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In, The Andy Williams Show, The Smothers Brothers,* and later *Saturday Night Live*. Sid Caesar had set the standard by which others would measure themselves. He was the pioneer who pushed out the frontiers of TV comedy.

Andrew Collins ©*Proscenium 1996*

CHARLES LINDBERGH: American aviator who made the first solo transatlantic flight (20/21 May 1927).

BERGDORF GOODMAN: Very exclusive Manhattan department store.

ETHEL AND JULIUS ROSENBERG: They were the first US civilians executed in peace time who were named communists and charged with espionage during the McCarthy witch hunt. They were brought to trial in New York City in 1951, were found guilty and sentenced to death. After several appeals and a world wide campaign for mercy had failed, they were executed at Sing Sing prison. Their trials rallied Jews around the world.

I.R.S.: Internal Revenue Service.

SMITHSONIAN: Museum in Washington.

WALTER CRONKITE: Famous television broadcaster.

NEIL

Marsha Mason with Richard Dreyfus in *The Goodbye Girl*

Neil Simon with director Mike Nicholas in front of the ticket queues for *Barefoot in the Park* on Broadway, 1963

1927 Born in the Bronx, New York, 4 July

1943 Graduates from De Witt Clinton High School

1945-6 Serves in US Army Air Force

1951 Writes for *The Goldbergs Sunshine Show* on TV

1953 Marries Joan Baim. Becomes writer on *Your Show of Shows* starring Sid Caesar

1955 Writes sketches with brother Danny for Broadway show *Catch a Star*

1956 Sketches with Danny for *New Faces of 1956*

1957 Wins Emmy Award for *Sid Caesar Show* TV scripts

1959 TV scripts for *The Gary Moore Show*

Emmy Award for *Phil Silvers Show* TV scripts

1961 *Come Blow Your Horn*, first Broadway play

1962 *Little Me*, musical based on book by Patrick Dennis. Book by Neil Simon, music by Cy Coleman and lyrics by Carolyn Leigh. Bob Fosse and Cy Feuer

1963 *Barefoot in the Park*, Broadway

Film of *Come Blow Your Horn* with Frank Sinatra, Lee J Cobb and Molly Picon

1965 *The Odd Couple*, Broadway

1966 *Sweet Charity* (musical), Broadway, starring Gwen Verdon

The Star-Spangled Girl, Broadway

Writes film script, *After the Fox*, with Cesare Zavottini

1967 Scripts Gene Saks' film of *Barefoot in the Park*, starring Robert Redford and Jane Fonda

1968 *Plaza Suite*, Broadway

Promises, Promises, musical with Burt Bacharach and Hal David, Broadway

Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon star in film of *The Odd Couple*

Simon's script receives Oscar nomination

1969 *Last of the Red-Hot Lovers*, Broadway

Bob Fosse films *Sweet Charity* with Shirley Maclaine and Sammy Davis Jr.

1970 *The Gingerbread Lady*, play about alcoholism, produced without great success on Broadway

Simon scripts film for Arthur Hiller, *The Out-of-Towners*, which stars Jack Lemmon and Sandy Dennis.

1971 *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, Broadway

Simon scripts *Plaza Suite* film, directed by Arthur Hiller and starring Walter Matthau and Maureen Stapleton

Film of *The Star-Spangled Girl*, directed by Jerry Paris.

1972 *The Sunshine Boys*, Broadway

Film of *Last of the Red-Hot Lovers*, scripted by Simon, starring Alan Arkin and Paula Prentiss

1973 *The Good Doctor*, dramatisation of some Chekhov stories, is unsuccessfully produced on Broadway

Wife Joan dies of cancer. Simon marries actress Marsha Mason.

Simon scripts film, *The Heartbreak Kid*, based on a story by Bruce Jay Friedman. Charles Grodin stars.

1974 *God's Favourite*, adapted from the Bible, Broadway

S I M O N

1975 Herbert Ross films *The Sunshine Boys* with Walter Matthau and George Burns.
Simon scripts film of *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, starring Jack Lemmon.

1976 *California Suite*, Beverly Hills version of *Plaza Suite*, Broadway. Scripts spoof murder-mystery film, *Murder by Death*. All-star cast featuring Truman Capote, David Niven, Maggie Smith, Peter Falk, Alec Guiness, Peter Sellers, James Coco and Elsa Lanchester.

1977 *Chapter Two*, Broadway.
The Goodbye Girl, film stars Marsha Mason, Quinn Cummings and Richard Dreyfus, whose performance earns him an Oscar.

1978 *They're Playing Our Song* (musical written with Marvin Hamlisch and Carol Bayer Sager), Broadway.
Simon scripts Bogart film spoof *The Cheap Detective*. Peter Falk stars as Sam Diamond, with support from Marsha Mason, Ann-Margaret, James Coco and John Houseman.
Maggie Smith wins an Oscar, for her performance as an actress failing to win an Oscar in the film of *California Suite*. Jane Fonda and Michael Caine co-star.

1979 Film of *Chapter Two*, with James Caan and Marsha Mason.

1980 *I Ought to be in Pictures*, Broadway.
Film, *Seems Like Old Times*, with Goldie Hawn, Chevy Chase and Charles Grodin.

1981 *Fools*, Broadway.
Film, *Only When I Laugh* based on *The Gingerbread Lady*, with Marsha Mason and Christy McNichol.

1982 Revised version of *Little Me*, Broadway.
Film of *I Ought to be in Pictures*, with Walter Matthau.

1983 *Brighton Beach Memoirs* produced on Broadway, with Matthew Broderick in the role of Eugene Jerome. Also in this year, Broderick appears in the Simon-scripted film *Max Dugan Returns*.

1984 Films, *The Lonely Guy* and *The Slugger's Wife*

1985 Second part of trilogy, *Biloxi Blues*, receives Tony Award for Best Play.
Female version of *The Odd Couple*.

1986 Concluding part of Jerome trilogy, *Broadway Bound*.
Film, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

1987 Following divorce from Marsha Mason, Simon marries Diane Lander.

1988 *Rumours*, Broadway.
Mike Nichols films *Biloxi Blues*, with Matthew Broaderick and Christopher Walken.

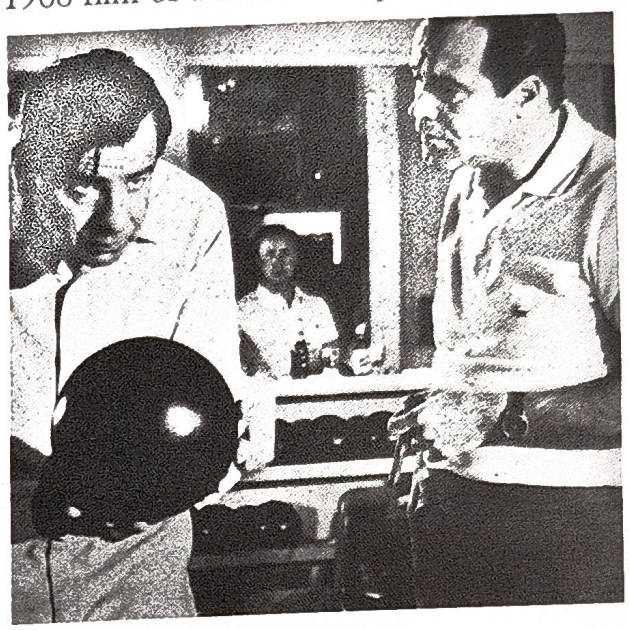
1991 *Lost in Yonkers*, Broadway (Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play).
The Marrying Man.

1992 *Jake's Women*.

1993 *The Goodbye Girl* makes stage debut.
Lost in Yonkers filmed for American TV.
Laughter on the 23rd Floor, on Broadway.

1995 *London Suite*, following the format of *Plaza Suite* and *California Suite*, opens Off-Broadway.

Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon in the 1968 film of *The Odd Couple*



Jane Fonda and Robert Redford in the 1967 film *Barefoot in the Park*

BIALYSTOCK & BLOOM

a fatal attraction

This play is produced "in association with Bialystock & Bloom Ltd"

I remember where I was when I heard that Elvis had died and I remember where I first saw Mel Brooks' film *The Pr*[illegible]*cers*. It was on a Tuesday night in 1969 at the Gala Royal Cinema in London's Edgware Road. There were eighteen peop[illegible] the audience about a dozen of whom, like me were suffering near terminal convulsion. I went again the following night a[illegible]nost of the audience from the Tuesday night were there again. By the time the run ended at the Gala we all knew the scrip[illegible]etty well near word perfect and my wife was considering citing Mel Brooks who wrote and directed this masterpiece in [illegible]orce proceedings. Those of you that were there that fateful night or are later converts to Producerism will know that in t[illegible]ilm, theatrical producer Max Biallystock (Zero Mostel) and humble accountant Leon Bloom (Gene Wilder) have a f[illegible]onal company called Bialystoock & Bloom for the purpose of producing *Springtime for Hitler* the worst musical ever writte[illegible] this being some time before some of my own musical productions). Although at that time of my life I was a humble acco[illegible]ant with no theatrical connection I identified more with Zero Mostel's delightfully dishonest producer character and for[illegible]d a company called Bialystock & Bloom Ltd. in the hope that one day I would find good use for it.

In the early seventies I became a manager of pop and rock artists and in spite of the artists taking eighty percent of my money, I was affluent enough to have a home (The House That Glitter Built) with a small screening room. Every year we had a Christmas Party where as a condition of attendance family and friends would be obliged to watch my personal print of the *The Producers*.

When we bought the house it was occupied by Larry Gelbart and his family who were leaving England to go back to America where Larry would write a little T.V. show called *M*A*S*H* and movies like *Tootsie*. I became friendly with Larry who is without doubt the wittiest man in the entire world. Larry used to tell me about his early days as a writer on Sid Caesars' *Caesar's Hour* working with Neil and Danny Simon, Mel Tolkin etc. and Mel Brooks, my idol who I of course had never met. His stories were hysterical and I used to fall about. I used to tell Larry stories about my exciting early life as a chartered accountant and Larry used to fall asleep. I had not yet found an appropriate use for Bialystock & Bloom Ltd. but somehow felt that I was getting closer.

I later visited Larry in California where he one day casually asked me if I would like to join him that evening for dinner with a couple of friends. We walked into the restaurant where sat the friends, Mel Brooks and his wife the unfairly beautiful Ann Bancroft. On being introduced to Mel he threw his arms around me and wrestled me to the floor where we rolled around for some time before Mel stood up, dusted himself down and announced to the restaurant that "he had never met this man in his life". There are worse ways of spending an evening than listening to Mel Brooks and Larry Gelbart talk about their days as writers for Sid Caesar, whilst looking at Ann Bancroft, although the dribbling is of course an embarrassment. Since that memorable evening I have met Mel several times. I always asked him if I could use Bialystock & Bloom to produce a musical stage play of *The Producers* and he always said NO! I will keep on asking but in the meantime Mel was gracious enough to give his blessing to my using the name for something else. I now felt I was getting closer.

Another of the brilliant *Caesars' Hour* writers and performers was Carl Reiner who had directed a film I was involved with called *Where's Poppa?*. Carl came to England for me in order to promote the film, so providing a further link in the chain especially as he had written and recorded a comedy album with Mel Brooks called *The Two Thousand Year Old Man* which is what my family were obliged to listen to when they were not watching *The Producers*.

Cut, as they say in the movies, to present time and imagine my excitement when Paddy Wilson who is not even Jewish, told me that he had an option on *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, a Neil Simon play about the writers on *Caesar's Hour* and invited me to be co-producer? Imagine my further excitement when Gene Wilder agreed to star.

After almost thirty years I had found the perfect use for Bialystock & Bloom Ltd. – I was off to little old lady land and no more cardboard belts. (You have to have seen the movie!)

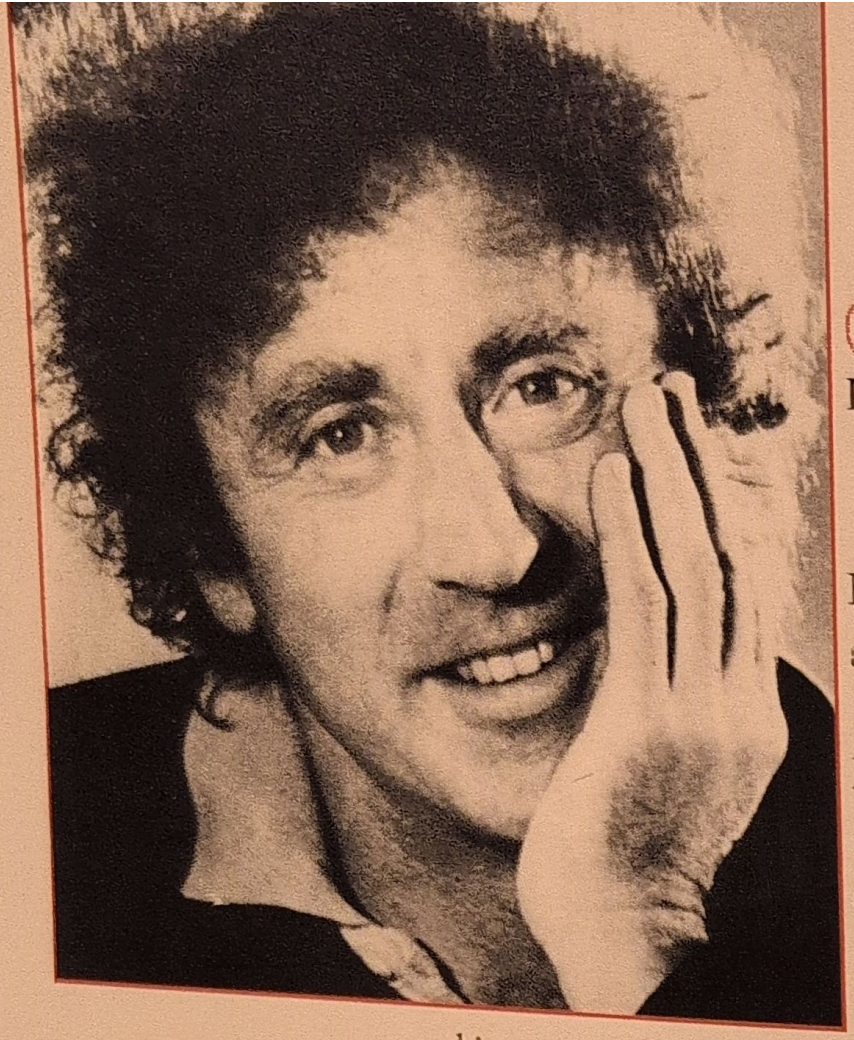
Laurence Myers. 1996

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

I first met the director Roger Haines in the mid 70's. There were four of us who worked together putting on musicals at the Library Theatre in Manchester and the Forum in Wythenshaw - Howard Lloyd-Lewis as director, Paul Kerryson who choreographed, Roger Haines as musical director and myself, in those days a Production Manager. We put on major musicals, Sweet Charity, Cabaret, Sweeney Todd and Merrily We Roll Along to mention a few. We went our separate ways, meeting up from time to time throughout the years. Then last year I ran into Roger in London when he was auditioning for his forthcoming production of Laughter on the 23rd Floor. He invited me to come and see it, so one wet wintry evening, almost a year ago, I headed north to Manchester and found myself settling down for what turned out to be one of the funniest evenings I have spent in the theatre. By the time the curtain came down for the interval, I knew that I wanted to produce this play. There and then I telephoned Neil Simon's lawyer in Los Angeles and started negotiations. After curtain down, I recollect telling Roger that the show would be going into the West End.

I saw it again the following evening and I had the same reaction. On returning to London, I suggested to Laurence Myers, whom I had recently met, that he should see the play, so off we set for Manchester. On the train back, we both felt that the way forward was to secure a major American movie star. I then heard that Gene Wilder was available, not realising at this time what a huge fan he was of Sid Caesar. I spoke to his British agent and arranged for the script to be delivered to him. Within days we received a message saying that he was keen to do the part. After auditioning for the rest of the cast, we embarked on a short tour and now here we are in the West End, exactly one year on.

Paddy Wilson 1996



GENE WILDER

MAX PRINCE

Born Jerry Silberman in Milwaukee, Wisconsin he began acting lessons at the age of thirteen with Herman Gottlieb.

At the age of fifteen, Wilder, after having seen Lee J Cobb and Mildred Dunnock in *Death of a Salesman*, played Willy Loman in his own adaptation. Fifteen years later, in one of the high moments of his early career, he played Bernard in the CBSTV presentation of the play, with Lee J Cobb and Mildred Dunnock.

Wilder studied drama at the University of Iowa, while spending his summers acting in summer stock. After graduating with a BA degree in theatre, he went to England to further his training at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. There, he became the first American to win the All-School fencing championship, a skill he later put to good use in the films *Start The Revolution Without Me* and *Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother.*

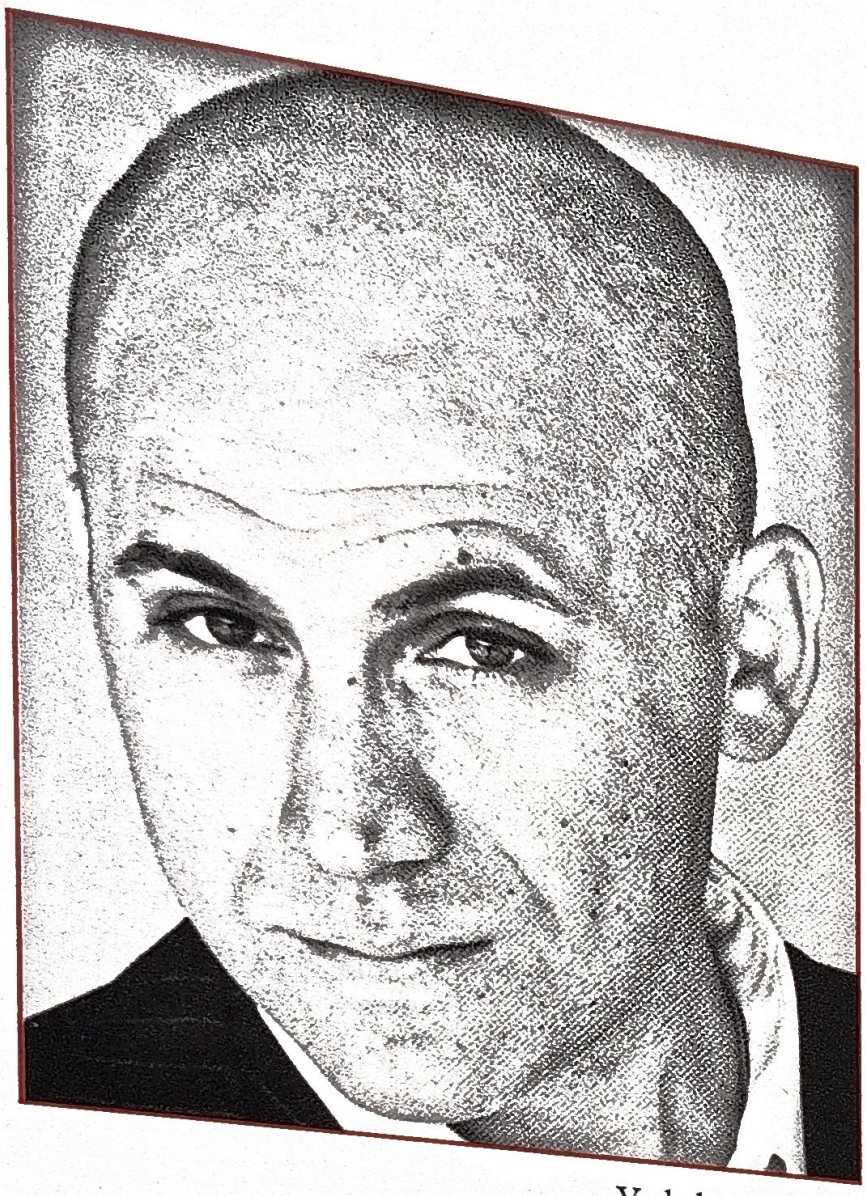
Returning to the US, Wilder was promptly drafted into the Army. Stationed at Valley Forge Hospital outside Philadelphia, he commuted to New York each week to study acting with Herbert Berghof. After his discharge, he continued his studies with Berghof as well as with Uta Hagen. His first professional job was in Herbert Berghof's production of *Twelfth Night* at the Cambridge Drama Festival, where he played the 2nd Officer and did the fencing choreography for the comic duel, which won rave reviews. He began studying with Lee Strasberg in private classes and then was one of two actors out of twelve hundred to be accepted into the renowned Actor's Studio.

In 1961, Wilder got his first career break in an off-Broadway production of Arnold Wesker's *Roots*. It quickly led to his Broadway debut as the comic valet in Graham Green's *The Complaisant Lover*, starring Sir Michael Redgrave, for which Mr Wilder won the Clarence Derwent Award.

The following year, Wilder's appearance on stage with Ann Bancroft in Berthold Brecht's *Mother Courage* proved to be a turning point in the young actor's career; he was introduced to Miss Bancroft's boyfriend, Mel Brooks. Wilder made his motion picture debut in the small but memorable role as the nervous undertaker in Arthur Penn's film, *Bonnie & Clyde*. Shortly after, he performed the role of Leo Bloom in Mel Brooks' *The Producers*, for which Wilder was nominated for an Academy Award. With Brooks again in *Young Frankenstein,* Wilder not only starred in the film but made his screen writing debut which earned him a second Oscar nomination.

Making his directorial bow the following year with *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother,* from his own screenplay, he went on to *The World's Greatest Lover,* for which he also composed a song.

Wilder's collaborations with Richard Prior have been wildly successful beginning with their first pairing in *Silver Streak* and then, more recently by *See No Evil, Hear No Evil.* Other film credits include *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, Blazing Saddles, The Frisco Kid* and *The Woman in Red.*

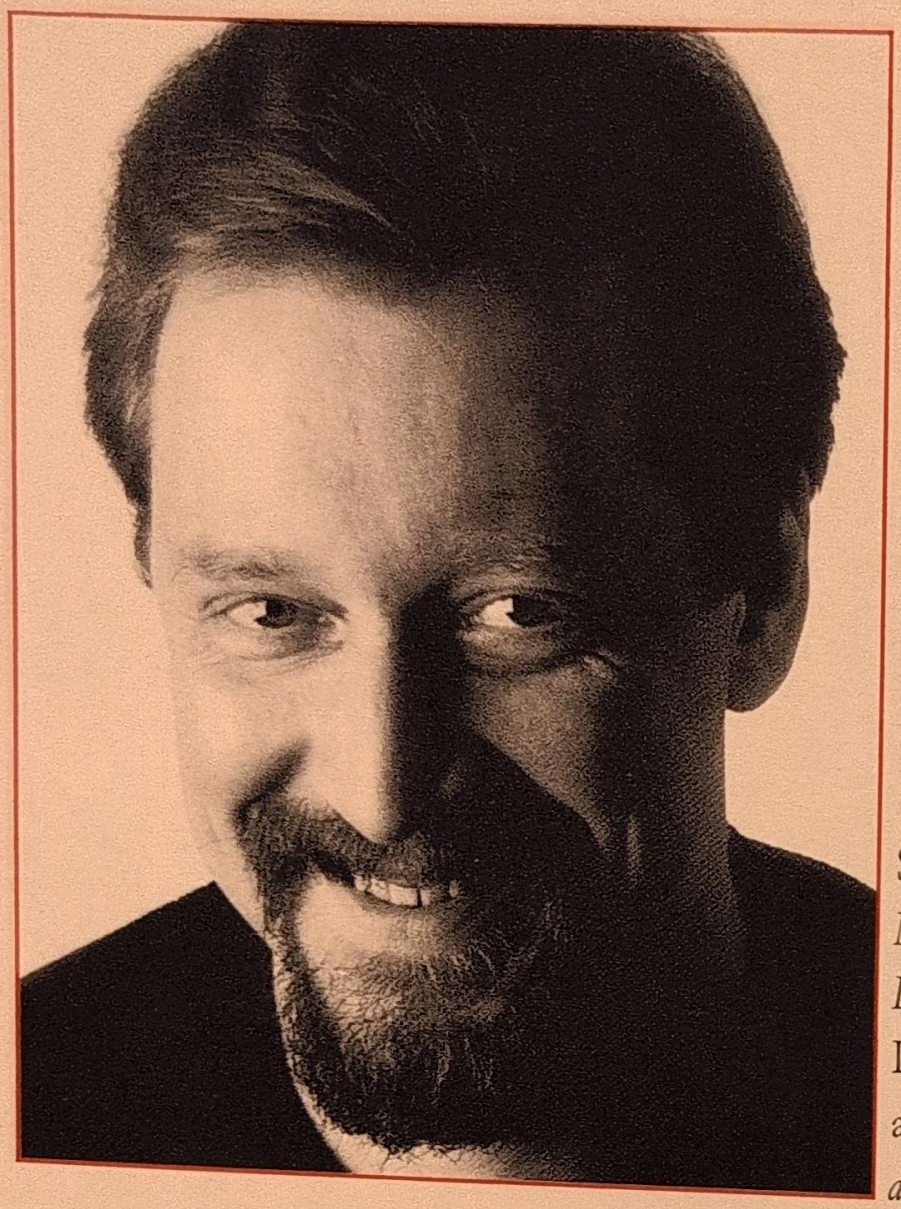


JOSEPH ALESSI
BRIAN DOYLE

Joseph Alessi trained at LAMDA. His theatre credits include *Animal Crackers, Romeo and Juliet* and *A View From The Bridge* at the Royal Exchange, *The Taming of the Shrew* at Leicester Haymarket, *The Snow Queen* at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, a RSC tour of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Tovarich, Henry VIII* and *Arsenic and Old Lace* at Chichester Festival Theatre.

Television credits include *Eye of the Storm, Spywatch, Pie in the Sky, 99-1, The Chief, Minder* and *All in the Game.*

Film credits include *Institute Benjamenta, Charlie* and *London Kills Me.*



STEFAN BEDNARCZYK

VALSKOLSKY

Stefan's theatre credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Leicester Haymarket; *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* at the Manchester Library; *Under Their Hats* at the King's Head and Leatherhead Theatres; *The Game of Love and Chance* at the Royal National Theatre; *Schippel The Plumber* and *Playing Sinatra* at Greenwich; *The LA Plays* at the Almeida; *Sugar Hill Blues* at Hampstead; *Twelfth Night, The Swaggerer* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park; *Victory* and *Robert and Elizabeth* at Chichester Festival Theatre; *Merrily We Roll Along, Noel and Gertie* and *Side by Side by Sondheim* at the Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, playing *Sinatra and the Belles of Notre Dame* at The Warehouse Theatre and *Mozart and Salieri* for ATC. His three one-man shows - and *So to Bednarczyk, Bednarczyk and Broomsticks* and *Stefan's Guide to Culture* have taken him to the Edinburgh Festival, Pizza on the Park, The King's Head, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Cannes.

Television credits include; *Crocodile Shoes, Crown Prosecutor, Love Hurts, Paul Merton - The Series, Norbert Smith, The Grand Style of Jazz.*

Radio credits include *Now We Are Seventy; Jim Davis, Friday Night is Music Night* and *Midweek.*

MARCIA FIRESTEN
CAROL WYMAN

Marcia Firesten trained at the American Conservatory Theatre. Her theatre credits include: Los Angeles: *Scenes from an Execution, Forever My Love, The Blue Dahlia* for which she won the Drama Logue Award, *Boo!* and *Slaughterhouse on Tanner's Close* for which she won the LA Weekly Award. In New York: *Boo!, The Blue Dahlia, Female Transport, The Dolly, Another Coming, Intimate Lies, Say Goodnight Gracie, The Taming of the Shrew and Twelfth Night*. She has also starred in *Bus Stop, Why Marry?, The Rose Tattoo, House of Blue Leaves, A Flea in Her Ear* and *The Imaginary Invalid.*

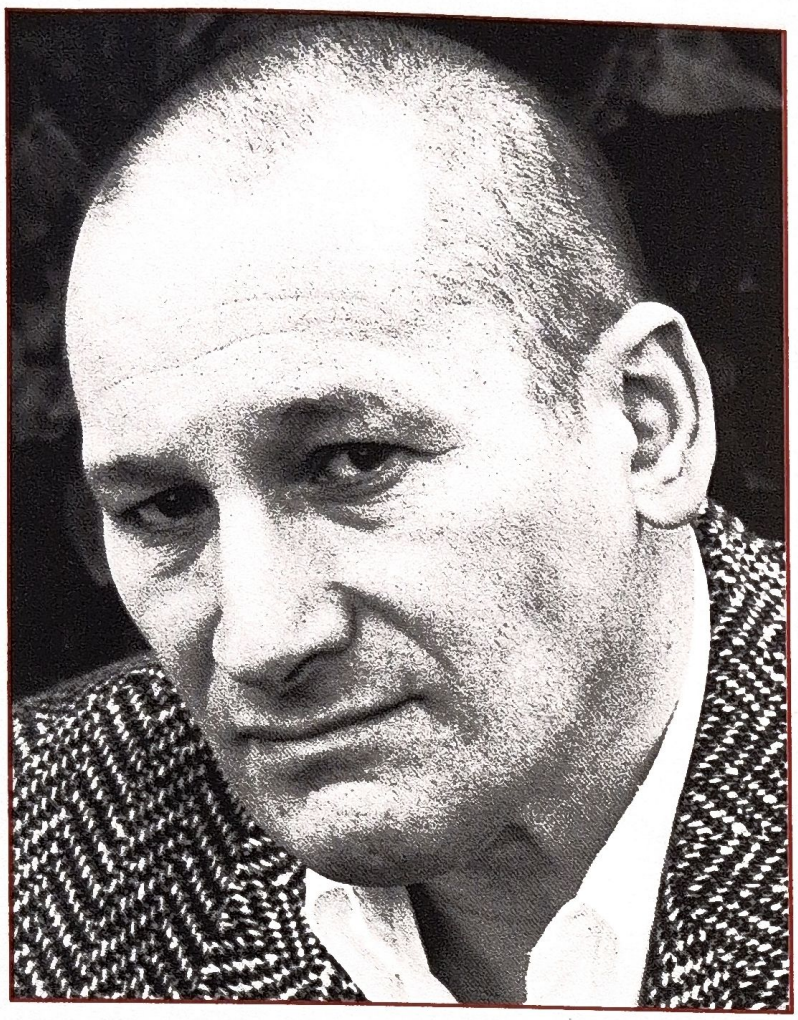
Television and film credits include *One for the Road, Seinfeld, Earth 2, Midnight Run, Ruby Takes a Trip, The Golden Girls, Family Business, Inner Sanctum* and *Kiss Me, Guido.*

REGINA FREEDMAN

HELEN

Regina Freedman's theatre appearances [illegible] Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being* [illegible] at the Lyric Theatre Belfast, Verucca Salt [illegible] *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at Sadler's W[illegible] The Ambulanceman and Mrs Pottinger in C[illegible] *Thrust* at the Theatre Royal Stratford E[illegible] and Violet in *Sweet Bird of Youth* for the Royal National Theatre. She has toured with such theatre companies as Remould, Eastern Angles, Red Shift and The Shadow Syndicate.

On television she has performed in various sketches with Hale and Pace, appeared on *Numbertime, The Bill, The Upper Hand, Plaza Petrol* and *Heil Honey, I'm Home.* She played Violet in *Goodnight Sweetheart*, Alison Smedley in *Murder Most Horrid* and was seen regularly last year as Milly in *Searching* by Carla Lane. She is soon to be seen as Jacqui in *Crewe Stories,* part of the Screen 2 series for BBC2.



LINAL HAFT
IRA STONE

Linal Haft's many stage performances include: in repertory: Leicester Haymarket, Belgrade Coventry; Bristol Old Vic Theatre Royal Northampton; Oldham Coliseum, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds; Birmingham Rep: Nuffield Theatre, Southampton; Cambridge Arts; Manchester Library; Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh Festival: Title role in *Macbeth*, Macheath in *The Threepenny Opera*, Arnold in *Torch Song Trilogy*, Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Jean in *Miss Julie*, The Corporal in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle,* Potiphar in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,* Aristotle Onasis in *Callas*, Sammy Samuels in *Comedians*, Philip Marlowe in *Private Dick*, More Axelrod in *Awake and Sing*, The King in *The King and I,* Lenny in *The Homecoming*, Dame in *Dick Whittington*, Otto in *Through the Leaves*, Leahy in *Safe in Our Hands*.

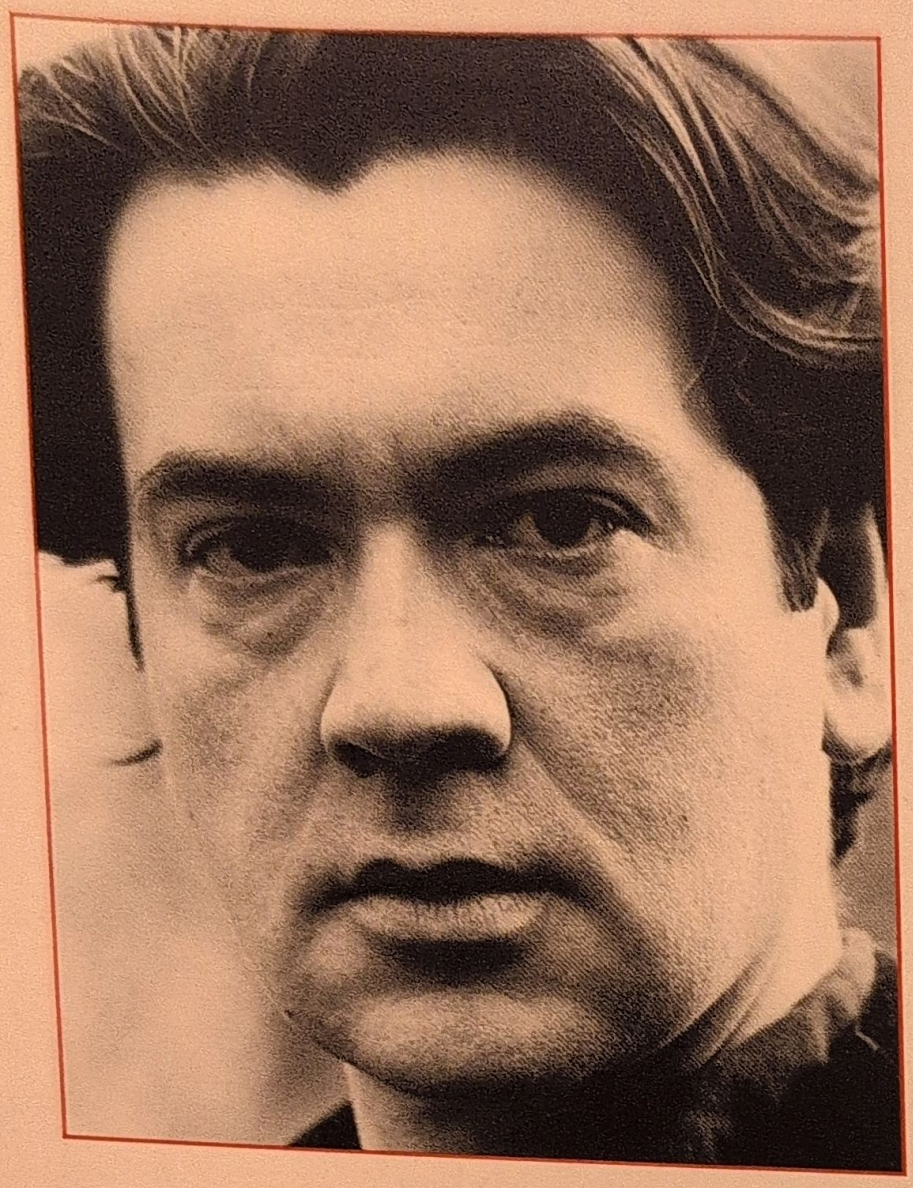
In the West End London: Bill Sykes in *Oliver!* (West End and Toronto, Canada); Groucho Marx in *Groucho in Toto* (Fortune); Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma* (Palace); Groucho Marx in *Minnies Boys* (The New London); Giri in *Arturo Ui* (Queens); Edmond (The Royal Court); The Father in *After the Fall* and Tomazo in *The Changeling* at the Royal National Theatre; *Man in Lunch* (Young Vic Studio); Alain in *School for Wives* (Almeida).

On television: *The Charmer, Bust, Remington Steele, Shine on Harvey Moon, Matlock, First Among Equals, Minder, Ball Trap on the Cote Sauvage, Night of the Golden Brain, Comedians, Great Expectations, Close to Home, The Upper Hand, Without Walls, The Great Dictator.*

On film: *The Birth of the Beatles, Zero Option, Murder on the Orient Express, Escape from Sobibor.*

Other work includes: Features on Pete Townshend's *Psychoderelict* album and toured North America with the stage version.

Linal has recently finished a two year contract with the Royal Shakespeare Company playing Fluellen in *Henry V,* Sicinus Vellutus in *Coriolanus,* Leo Katz in David Edgar's Award winning play *Pentecost* and Baquin in *Slaughter City.*

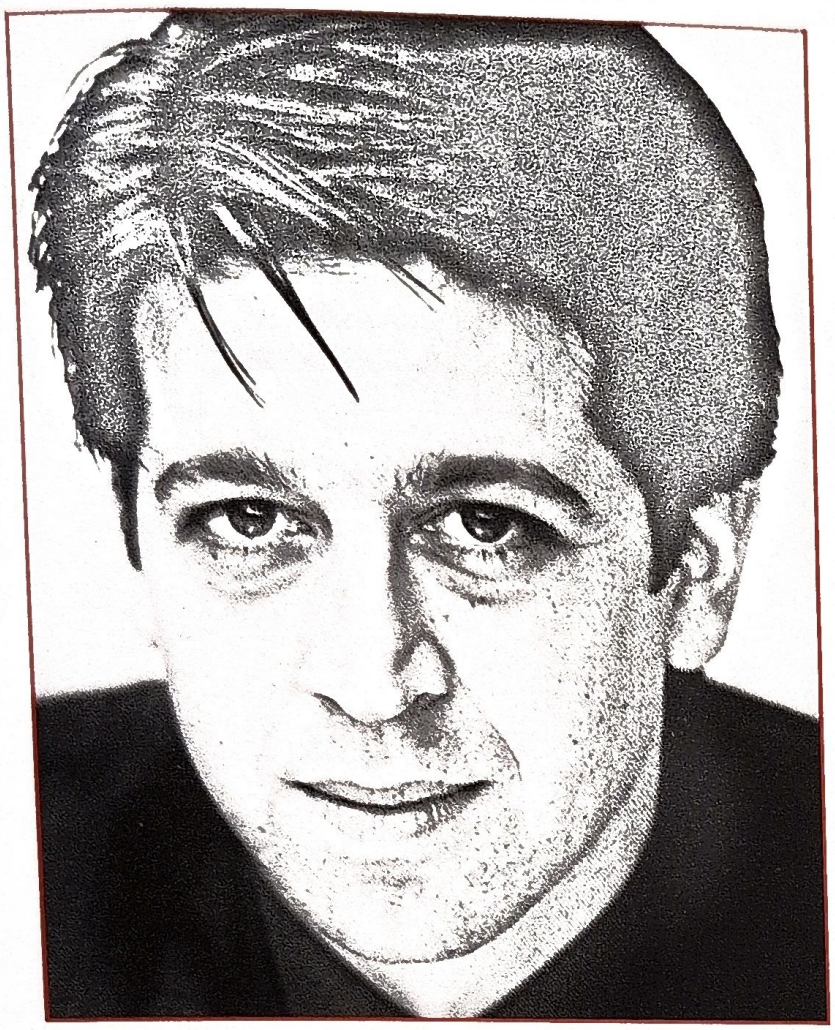


MARK JAX

KENNY FRANKS

Mark Jax's stage appearances include *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Nottingham Playhouse, *One Night Stand* at York Theatre Royal and *Two Plans and a Passion* at Exeter's Northcott Theatre. Appearances at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough include *The Dresser, The Linden Tree, Bricks and Mortars, The Westwoods and I* and *A Chorus of Disapproval*. For the National Theatre work includes The *Government Inspector, Pravda, The Futurists* and *Strange Kind of Animal* and for the Birmingham Rep, *Women Beware Women, Rope, Romeo and Juliet Atheist's Tragedy, Peter Pan, Tenant of Wildfell Hall , Macbeth* and *Way of the World*. Other plays include *A Christmas Carol* at the Young Vic, *When We Are Married* at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, *The Devils* at Theatr Clwyd, *Angola USA* at the White Bear Theatre, *Mansfield Park* and *Romeo and Juliet* at the Crucible, *The Norman Conquests* at Salisbury Playhouse and *Mansfield Park* at Chichester Festival Theatre.

Television and film credits include: *Tales of the Unexpected, The Road To 1984, Grange Hill, A View From The Bridge, Two Of Us, Most Dangerous Man in the World, Shake Hands Forever, Stealing Heaven* and *Living Doll.*



ROLF SAXON
MILT FIELDS

Rolf was born in Virginia and raised in California. He studied with the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco and performed with the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival. He came to England to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

His theatre work includes: *Oleanna* (Theatr Clywd); *The Flipside* (The Mill); *Chapter Two* (Middle and Far East tour); *PVT-Wars* (Latchmere); *Dracula* (Plymouth).

Also included are a handful of British premieres: Lanford Wilson's *Brontosaurous* (Lyric, Hammersmith); *Short Eyes* by Miguel Pinero (Man-in-the-Moon); *Lost In Yonkers* (Tour and Strand Theatre) and most recently *Laughter On The 23rd Floor* at the Manchester Library Theatre both by Neil Simon.

Television work includes the series of *Love Hurts* (III), *Capital City* and *Pulaski*. He has also been seen in episodes of *Space Precinct, Crown Prosecutor, One for the Road, Tomorrow People, Sitting Pretty, Poirot, The Upper Hand, Birds of a Feather* and *Boon*. Movies and mini series include: *The Affair, Hostages, The Trials of Oz, She Wolf of London, The Dirty Dozen II, The First Modern Oympics*. He has just finished work on the third in Neil Simon's "Suite" trilogy, *London Suite*.

Film work includes *Joyriders, A Time for Destiny, The Lords of Discipline, Invitation to the Wedding, Little Lord Fauntleroy* and most recently, *Mission Impossible*.

Neil Simon's LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

Cast in order of appearance

Lucas Brickman
Toby Whithouse

Milt Fields
Rolf Saxon

Val Skolsky
Stefan Bednarczyk

Brian Doyle
Joseph Alessi

Kenny Franks
Mark Jax

Carol Wyman
Marcia Firesten

Max Prince
Gene Wilder

Helen
Regina Freedman

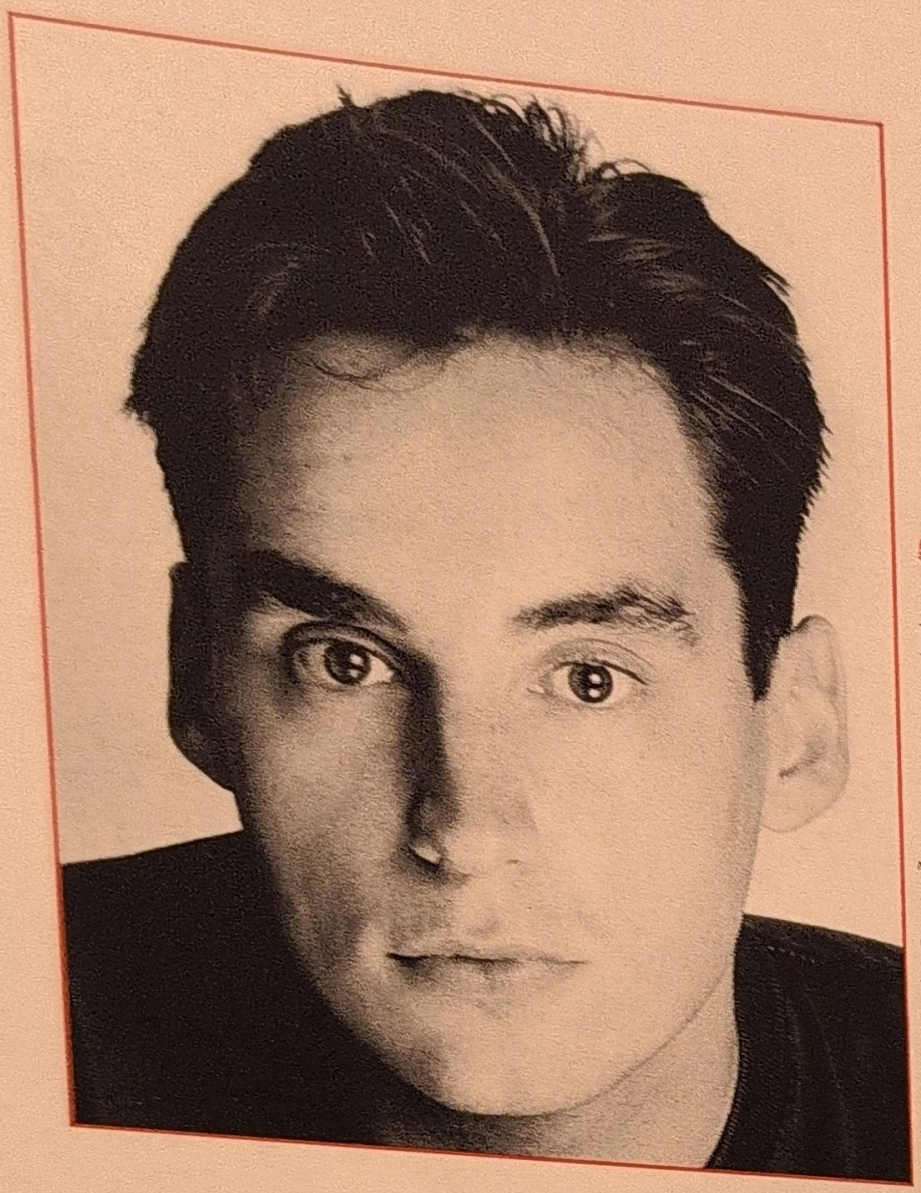
Ira Stone
Linal Haft

Director Roger Haines

Designer Judith Croft
Lighting Designer Nick Richings
Production Manager Rick Locker
Company Stage Manager Sarah Gibson
Deputy Stage Manager Trish McClenaghan
Assistant Stage Managers Michael Connock Sarah Devlin
Production Electrician Chris Cunningham
Wardrobe Master David Morgan
Costume Supervisor Jennie Gauld
Dressers Adele Brown, Davina Elliot, Colin Inglis
Props Buyer Jane Slattery
Voice Coach Penny Dyer
Casting Director Joyce Nettles

Act 1
1953 - The Max Prince Show
Interval
Act II
Seven months later

The performance will last approximately 2 hours and 36 minutes including an interval of 15 minutes.



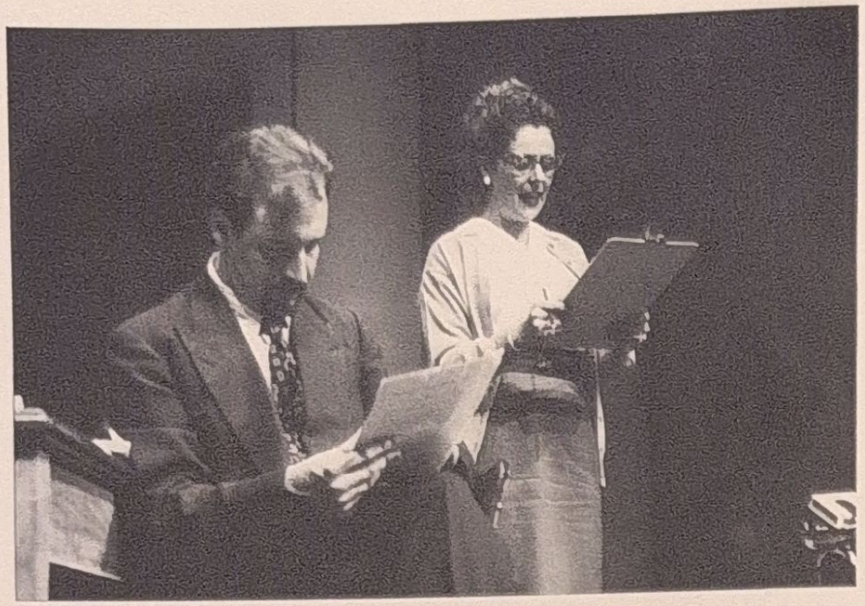
TOBY WHITHOUSE

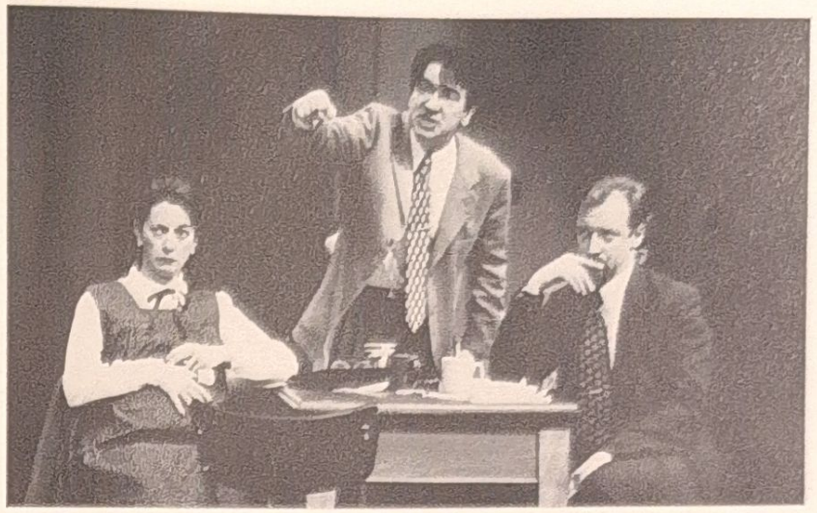
LUCAS BRICKMAN

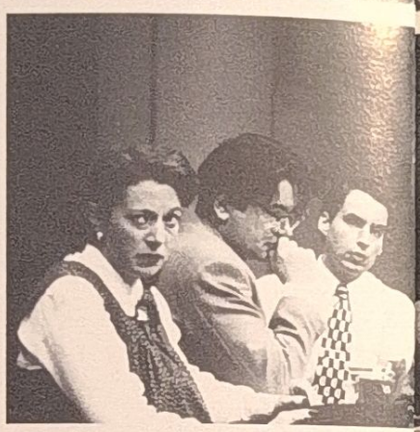
Toby Whithouse trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. His theatre credits include Eugene in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Biloxi Blues* at Salisbury Playhouse, and again in *Broadway Bound* at Greenwich. Other work includes *Inventing a New Colour* at Exeter's Northcott Theatre, *The Television Programme* at the Gate Theatre Notting Hill, *The Devil's Only Sleeping* at the Birmingham Rep and on tour *The Family Way* and *La Mandragola* at Bolton Octagon, *Raising Mrs Rosetti* at the Link Theatre and *The Tempest* at Nottingham Playhouse, Theatr Clwyd, Glasgow Tramway and Athens.

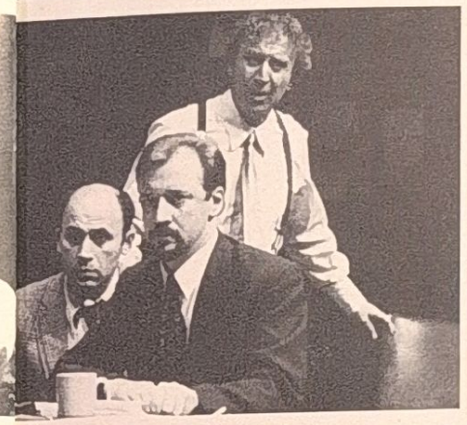
Television credits include Norman Foss in *The House of Eliott, The Upper Hand, The Complete Guide to Relationships, The Scarlet and Black, A Masculine Ending* and *The Bill*. Films include *Shadowlands* and *Mrs 'Arris Goes to Paris*.

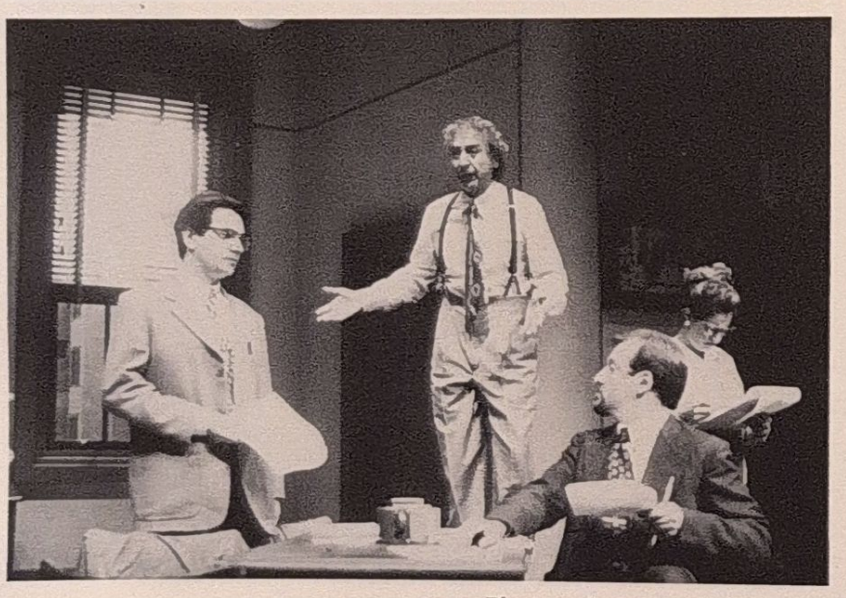
Photographer: Gerald Murray

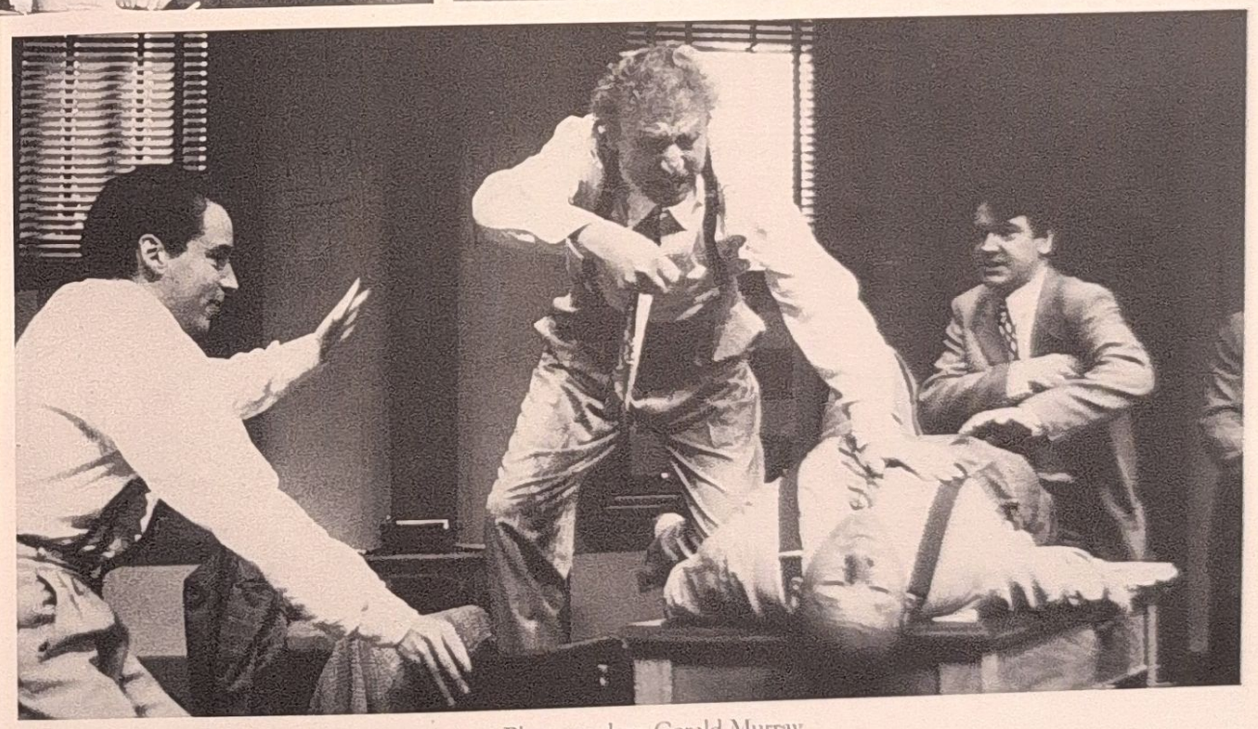












Photographer: Gerald Murray

Photographer: Gerald Murray

ROGER HAINES
DIRECTOR

Roger trained as a musician at The Royal College of Music and began his career in the theatre after spending eight years as Head of Music at a London Comprehensive School. As Musical Supervisor of Manchester's Library Theatre Company he was responsible for the European premieres of Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along, Follies* and *Pacific Overtures*. He then went on to direct the Library Theatre's highly successful production of Sondheim's *Into the Woods* (winner of the 1993 Manchester Evening News Award for Best production of a Musical) and *Assassins* (winner of the 1994 TMA National Theatre Award for Best Production of a Musical). Other musicals he has directed include *A Little Night Music* and *Sweeney Todd*; the European premieres of *March of the Falsettos* (which subsequently transferred to London), *Sophisticated Ladies* (which also transferred to London), *Maltby and Shire's Baby* (National Tour and winner of Best Production of a Musical 1991), and *Closer Than Ever* which launched the First Festival of Musicals in Buxton in 1992, *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Peter Pan* (Theatre Royal, Norwich and National Tour), *High Society* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Cabaret* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield), *Annie* (Liverpool Playhouse and Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead).

Plays directed include *Steel Magnolias, Driving Miss Daisy* (both National Tours); *When We Are Married* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield) and for the Library Theatre, Manchester, *Bent, Torch Song Trilogy,* Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs, Broadway Bound, Lost in Yonkers* (which won the 1994 Manchester Evening News Award for Best Production of a Play) and the European premiere of *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*. Most recently he directed *Neville's Island* (at the Forum Theatre Wythenshawe); *The Borrowers* for the (Birmingham Stage Company), and *The Secret Garden* (for which he also composed the music) which is at present on a National tour.

JUDITH CROFT
DESIGNER

Judith trained in fashion and textile design, then took a postgraduate course in theatre design at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, since when she has completed over fifty professional productions. She started as resident designer at the Chester Gateway Theatre, where designs included *The Elephant Man, The Tragical History Tour* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Judith moved to be Head of Design at Oldham Coliseum Theatre, before going freelance in 1986. During the next five years she designed for theatres in the north west and in London. Her work included *Tartuffe, Girlfriends, The Railway Children, Top Girls, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and young people's touring theatre. In 1991 Judith became Head of Design at the Library Theatre Company in Manchester. Her designs for the company have included the Neil Simon trilogy *Brighton Beach Memoirs, Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound, Assassins, Two Way Mirror, Ghosts, Goodnight Mr Tom, Laughter on the 23rd Floor* and four Christmas shows *Peter Pan, Jungle Book, Aladdin* and *A Christmas Carol.*

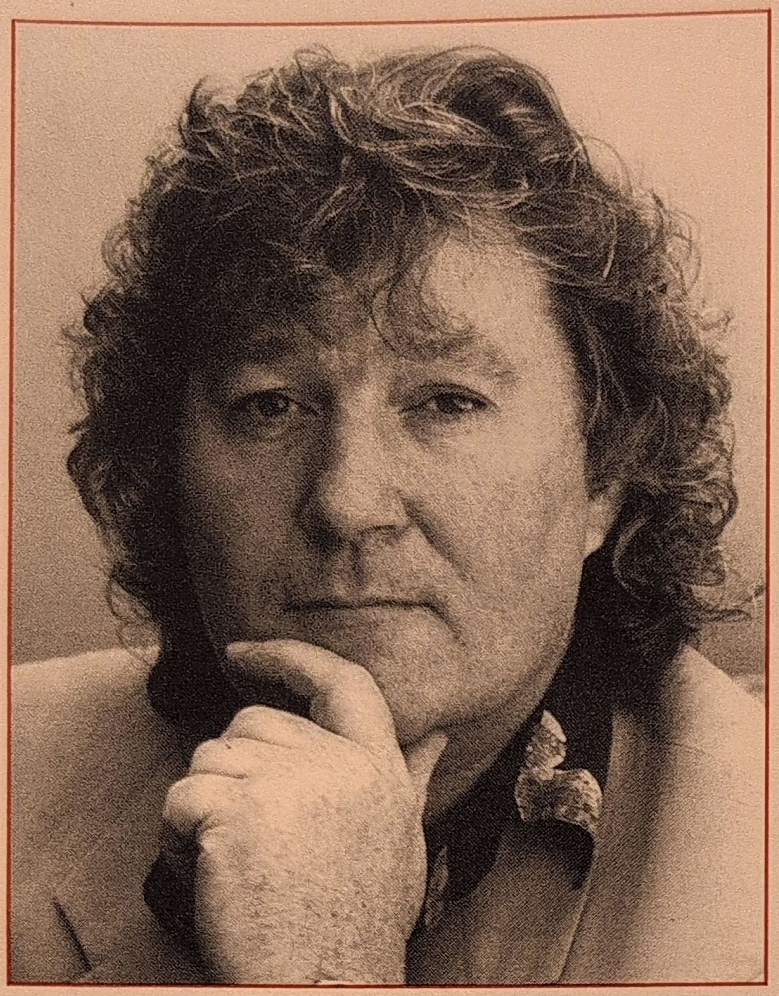
NICK RICHINGS
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Nick's many London productions include *Two Boys in Bed on a Cold Winter's Night*, Arts Theatre; *The Master Builder*, Haymarket Theatre; *The Second Coming* and *Hellbent*, for Nigel Charnock at the Drill Hall, *What a Show,* Prince of Wales Theatre; *Hot Mikado*, Queen's Theatre; *Fiddler on the Roof,* London Palladium; *Aspects of Love*, Prince of Wales; *Barnum*, Dominion Theatre; *The Chippendales*, Strand Theatre; *Valentine's Day,* GlobeTheatre; *A Slip of the Tongue,* Shaftesbury Theatre; *The Sound of Music*, Sadlers Wells; *Some Like it Hot,* Prince Edward Theatre, *The King and I*, Sadlers Wells; *The Maids* and *No Way Out* for Actors Touring Company at the Drill Hall.

Touring credits include *The Master Builder*, Canada; Tommy Steele's *What a Show* and *Singin' in the Rain*; *Sweet Charity*, Handstand Productions; the musical *Cinderella* for Ronald S Lee in Tokyo; *Aspects of Love, Barnum, The Sound of Music, 42nd Street*, which also appeared at London's Dominion Theatre; *Swan Lake,* Moscow Classical Ballet; *South Pacific, Chess* and *Guys and Dolls*. Repertory productions include: *Neville's Island, The BFG, Goodnight Mr Tom, Small Craft Warnings, Lost in Yonkers* and the regional premiere of *Assassins*, for the Library Theatre, Manchester; *A Christmas Carol*, Theatre Royal Nottingham; *The Borrowers*, Birmingham Stage Company; *French Without Tears*, Palace Theatre Watford; *Jeffrey*, Greenwich Theatre; *Hot Mikado,* Churchill Theatre Bromley; *Lonely Hearts*, Old Fire Station, Oxford; *When We Are Married, Annie* and *Oliver!*, Crucible Theatre, Sheffield; *Great Expectations*, Hornchurch; *Annie*, Liverpool Playhouse; *Stupid Cupid*, Gay Sweatshop; *Chicago*, English Touring Theatre; *The Wizard of Oz*, Olympia Theatre, Dublin. Nick lit the 1995 Sydmonton Festival for Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and earlier this year lit several productions for Royal Caribbean Cruise Liners' new ship The Splendour of the Seas.

PENNY DYER
VOICE COACH

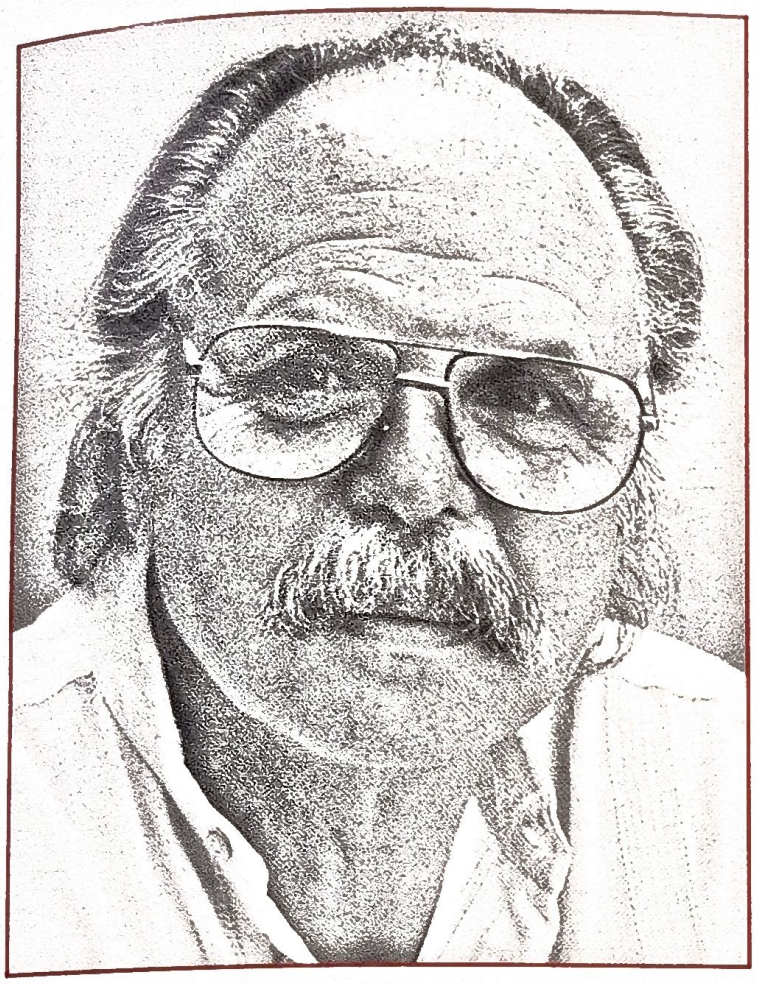
Penny trained on the teaching course at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Taught at Central 1987 - 1990 and at RADA 1991-1995. Theatres includes: in London: *The Memory of Water, Slavs, Colliers' Friday Night, Ghost from a Perfect Place* (Hampstead); *Long Day's Journey into Night* (Young Vic); *Mojo Sweetheart* (Royal Court); *Playboy of the West Indies, Two Trains, Runnin'* (Tricycle); *The Crackwalker, Hunting Scenes from Lower Bavaria* (Gate); *Blood Wedding* (RNT); *Mary & Lizzie* (RSC); *An Inspector Calls, Indian Ink, Cyrano de Bergerac, The Revengers' Comedies, The Queen & I, Shadowlands, Another Time, The Merchant of Venice* (Peter Hall Company). Also: *Hello and Goodbye* (Theatr Clwyd); *Love* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); *Steel Magnolias* (Queen's Hornchurch); *Blue Remembered Hills* (Crucible, Sheffield); *Of Mice and Men* (Nottingham Playhouse); *The Rivals, When We Are Married* (Chichester Festival Theatre) and numerous productions for The Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre. Television: *Band of Gold, Poldark, Take Pity, The English Wife, Titmuss Regained, A Small Dance.* Film: *Smillas' Sense of Snow, Surviving Picasso, The Brylcreem Boys, The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, Butterfly Kiss, A Feast of July, Immortal Beloved.*



PATRICK J WILSON &
PERICLES PRODUCTIONS

PRODUCER

Patrick Wilson has worked extensively in the theatre since 1970, with over 25 years experience at various levels in the subsidised sector including actor, stage manager, production manager and ending up as Administrator at Theatr Clwyd. He set up Pericles Productions in 1993 to produce high quality presentations of both modern and period classic plays. Thus far, he has produced and toured W Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife* (with Fiona Fullerton and Nigel Davenport, directed by Peter James), Bernard Slade's *Same Time, Next Year* (with Karl Howman and Kate Fitzgerald, directed by Marina Caldarone) and Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* (with Charlotte Cornwell and Bernard Hill, directed by David Thacker) which transferred to the Strand Theatre in the West End. Recent productions on tour were Alan Ayckbourn's *Confusions* and a new adaptation of *The Secret Garden*. Future productions include: Ayckbourn's *Just Between Ourselves* and Arthur Miller's *All My Sons,* both scheduled for early next year. Pericles Productions is a member of the West End Producers Alliance. Paddy is married to Carmel who works for IMG.



LAURENCE MYERS
PRODUCER

Laurence Myers was born in London and earned a living, until qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, by working as a "pitch man" on Sunday mornings at Petticoat Lane Market.

In 1964, Myers secured his first music business client, the legendary record producer Micky Most and went on to represent The Rolling Stones, The Beatles' Apple Corp., The Animals, Herman's Hermits, The Kinks and Donovan as well as several of England's leading songwriters and producers.

In 1970, Myers went into the commercial side of the music business, trading as GTO Group of Companies, he managed Gary Glitter, David Bowie, The New Seekers, Alan Price, The Tremeloes, The Sweet, Sailor, Lionel Bart and others. In 1972 he founded Arcade Records, the first European Company to TV merchandise records including artists such as Elvis, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Roy Orbison, Fats Domino etc, etc. 1974 saw the birth of GTO Records with artists Donna Summer, Billy Ocean, Dana, Fox and others. Myers sold GTO Records to CBS (Now Sony) in 1978.

GTO Films was started in 1973 and amongst the films produced or distributed by the Company were *The Greek Tycoon, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Elvis the Movie, The Wanderers, Where's Poppa?, Breaking Glass* and some truly awful low budget pop movies.

In 1988, Myers produced *Budgie* starring Adam Faith and Anita Dobson at the Cambridge Theatre, London. He produced *Matador* which was opened successfully in America before coming to the West End in 1991, starring Stephanie Powers and John Barrowman and winning a Laurence Olivier Award.

In 1993, Myers co-produced *Liza Minelli's Tribute* to Sammy Davis Junior for the Royal Marsden Hospital Cancer Appeal, producing more than half a million pounds for the Charity.

Myers is currently working with Don Black (who as well as being the lyricist of *Sunset Boulevard, Aspects of Love, and Tell Me on a Sunday* is both an Oscar and Tony Award Winner) and Malcolm Maclaren on the development of an new musical. Laurence is married to Marsha and has three adult children. He eats well and plays tennis badly.

SARAH DEVLIN

Understudy

CAROL, HELEN

Among her many performances with Norwich based theatre company Stomping Feet, Sarah has played Greta in *Metamorphosis,* Annabella in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* Young Woman in *Mountain Language,* Mary in *The Bald Prima Donna,* and created the part of Sissy in *The Lottery Ticket* (BAC, Pleasance Theatre, Edinburgh). She has understudied the parts Thomasina in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia,* Eleanor in *Dead Funny,* Doris in *Same Time Next Year,* and recently Hilary in Michael Frayn's new play *Now You Know.*

TIM PEPPER

Understudy

MAX, IRA AND BRIAN

Tim Pepper's career started in repertory theatre appearing in *The Rivals* (the Watermill, Newbury); *Barefoot in the Park* and *Henry IV* (Forum Theatre Billingham). He has also appeared in several successful films including *Get Carter* and *Tommy.* After an eighteen year break Tim retrained at the Drama Studio, London. Since then Tim's theatre credits include *Run for Your Wife* (SE Asia and Middle East Tour); *Candida* (Alexander Theatre, Birmingham); *Shreds and Fancies* (Old Red Lion); *Ghosts* (Eye Theatre, Suffolk); *Don Juan* (Chelsea Centre Theatre) and most recently *Come Together* (Man in the Moon). Tim made his West End debut in *Lost in Yonkers* at the Strand Theatre. His television credits include: *Crime Limited* (BBC); *Ellington* (Yorkshire TV); *Call Red, Strange But True* (LWT) and *The Bill* (Thames TV).

STEPHEN ISRAEL

Understudy

LUCAS, MILT, VAL AND KENNY

Stephen gained a History degree at the University of East Anglia, before training at the Arts Educational Drama School.

Theatre includes: *Waiting for Stoppard* (Bristol Old Vic and tour); *The Life of The Galileo* (Young Vic); *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Theatre de la Main d'Or, Paris); *The Greatest Star* (National Tour); *The Ice Pick* (Winner of 1990 Brighton Festival Award); *Songs and Dreams* (Vienna's English Theatre); *Candide* (Riverside Studio); *Alice in Wonderland* (Watersmeet, Rickmansworth); TV includes: *Passin' Through* (Central Television).

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On the newly built Shaftesbury Avenue, 1906-1907 heralded the arrival of the theatrical twins – the Globe and the Queens Theatres, designed by the same architect, W. G. Sprague, to complement one another's appearance. Due to safety requirements, each theatre was built on a corner, and the Queens Theatre – the younger of the two, on the corner of Wardour Street – opened its doors on the 8th October 1907 with a comedy, The Sugar Bowl, presented by Herbert Sleath with his wife Ellis Jeffrey and Edmund Gwenn in the cast; it was not a success, and was replaced by Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, a transfer from the Savoy Theatre, with Granville Barker playing the leading role. Like its sister theatre the Apollo, controversy raged over the choice of name, one discarded alternative being the Central, which Shaw complained "sounded like a criminal court or a railway terminus". There had been an earlier Queens Theatre in Long Acre, demolished in 1887, but with the permission of Queen Alexandra the traditional and royal name was revived. Plays and musicals followed: *The Dairymaids* with Phyllis Dare and *The Belle of Brittany* (1908), then came George Graves and Ruth Vincent in *The Persian Princess* (1909). H. B. Irving acquired the lease, producing a succession of his father Henry's plays and revivals: *The Bells, The Lyons Mail, The House Opposite* – and in 1910 he produced the blood-curdling *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The policy was unsettled, however, the theatre struggled; then in 1913 an enterprising management had an idea: London was experiencing the latest dance craze, the Tango, and the theatre staged *Tango Teas*: for half-a-crown (12½p) patrons could indulge in this latest entertainment, whilst watching perhaps a dress parade and sipping afternoon tea. It was a most successful venture, but hardly 'Theatre'! In that same year, Arthur Collins of Drury Lane produced his excellent farce, *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford*, reaching 151 performances. Then real good fortune came to the theatre in 1914 in the shape of two Jewish gentlemen in the ready-made clothing business who called themselves Potash and Perlmutter. Played by two lovable American comedians named Augustus Yorke and Robert Leonard, they packed the theatre for 665 performances; th sequel, *Potash and Perlmutter In Society*, successfully follo in 1916.

In 1919 actor Owen Nares joined lessee Alfred But presenting *The House of Peril* and *The Cinderella Man*. T 20's produced such successes as *Bluebird's Eighth Wife*, a tra of Fred and Adele Astaire in *Stop Flirting* (1923) and Edm Gwenn as Samuel Pepys with Yvonne Arnaud in the co dy *And So To Bed* (1926). In 1928 the theatre was transfor d into an American courthouse, with the audience participating in the play, for *The Trial of Mary Duggan*. The early '30s witnessed Shaw's The Apple Cart with Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Edith Evans, also Sir John Gielgud's memorable performance in the West End in the Old Vic production of Hamlet, followed by Sir Cedric Hardwicke again in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Robert Morley's first play, Short Story, was produced in 1935 with a glittering cast which included Marie Tempest, Sybil Thorndike, Margaret Rutherford, Ursula Jeans, A. E. Matthews and Rex Harrison. 1937 witnessed the brilliant Gielgud/Ashcroft season, presenting *Richard III, The School For Scandal, Three Sisters* and *The Merchant of Venice*, with a supporting almost-'Who's-Who-In-the-Theatre' cast featuring Michael Redgrave, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quayle, Leon Quartermaine, Harcourt Williams, Dennis Price, Angela Baddeley, Athene Seyler and Rachel Kempson. This season was followed by Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus*, drawing crowds until the general closure on the outbreak of war.

In December 1939, H. M. Tennent's revue *All Clear* re-opened the theatre, followed by Owen Nares and Celia Johnson

Theatre

in *Rebecca*, when sadly, at the height of its success, on the night of the 24th September 1940 the Queens Theatre was badly damaged by a bomb, becoming the first London theatre casualty of the war.

After standing derelict for almost twenty years the theatre was rebuilt in the late '50s, with a new modern exterior, whilst the original style was largely maintained inside. The theatre re-opened on 8th July 1959 with John Gielgud's *The Ages of Man*, followed by the successful *The Aspern Papers* with 370 performances, Robert Bolt's *The Tiger and The Horse* (1960) and, in 1961, Anthony Newley in his own musical *Stop the World – I Want To Get Off!* scored 485 performances.

Further productions included *Mary Mary* (1963), a revival of *Present Laughter* (1965), Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* (1966), Ustinov's *Halfway Up a Tree* (1967), *Conduct Unbecoming* (1969), *Private Lives* (1972), Franco Zeffirelli's *Saturday Sunday Monday* (1974) and the long-running *Otherwise Engaged*, with 1,029 performances (1975). 1978 saw the production of *The Old Country*, followed by *The Dresser* with Tom Courtenay (1980). Penelope Keith scored a personal success in *Moving* (1981). *Quartermaine's Terms* followed, then *Another Country*, in which Kenneth Branagh made his West End debut (1982), a revival of *Hay Fever* (1983), and America's Charlton Heston starred in the famous naval drama *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* (1985).

Ronald Harwood's play *The Interpreters,* with Maggie Smith and Edward Fox (1986), was followed by a successful run of *Wonderful Town!* starring Maureen Lipman (1986), a season of Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1987) and, for a highly successful seventeen-month run through 1987 and '89, Jeffrey Archer's first play *Beyond Reasonable Doubt.*

A transfer from the Royal National Theatre of Alan Bennett's *Single Spies* followed, which played to full houses for a limited season until it was replaced by the moving love story of C. S. Lewis and Joy Davidman, the award-winning *Shadowlands*, which had a long and successful run before departing to Broadway, when it was followed by the three Redgraves (Vanessa, Lynn and Jemma) in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. This had a limited but very successful season, to be followed by the new musical *Matador*, produced by Laurence Myers and a revival of Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, with Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson as the two tramps, took the theatre through to the end of 1991. A period of closure for refurbishment followed and in the following April, the Queens Theatre re-opened with the colourful and acclaimed African Dance Show, *Sikulu*, which had a very successful season until giving way to *Radio Times*, a musical starring Tony Slattery, followed by Thelma Holt's acclaimed production of *Much Ado About Nothing* starring Mark Rylance and Janet McTeer – the first performance of a Shakespeare play at the Queens and, indeed, Shaftesbury Avenue since 1938.

David Essex, Donald Sinden and Miriam Margolyes were next to appear at the Queens in The Peter Hall Company's production of *She Stoops To Conquer.* The theatre then presente the highly successful Australian song-and-dance show, Hot Sho Shuffle, and this was followed by David Suchet as the music h star, Sid Field, in *What A Performance.* This was followed by a revival of *The Clandestine Marriage*, starring and directed by Nigel Hawthorne. The next production was *Prisoner Cell Bloc H - The Musical* starring Lily Savage which was followed by *Passion* starring Michael Ball which terminated its successful season immediately prior to the current production.

George Hoa

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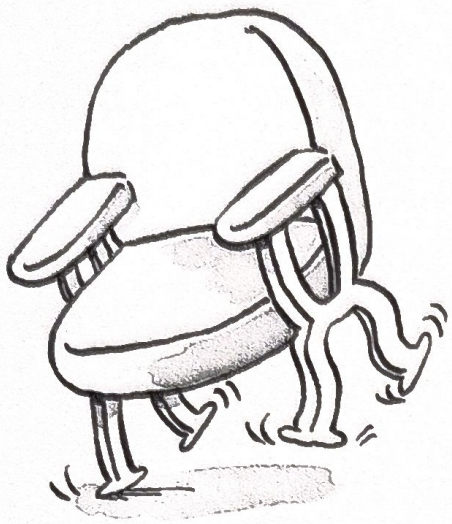

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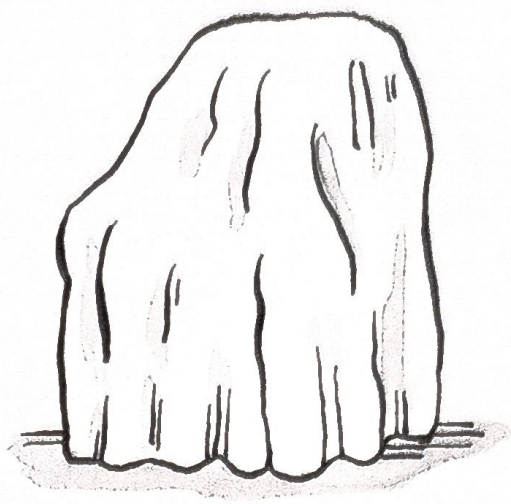

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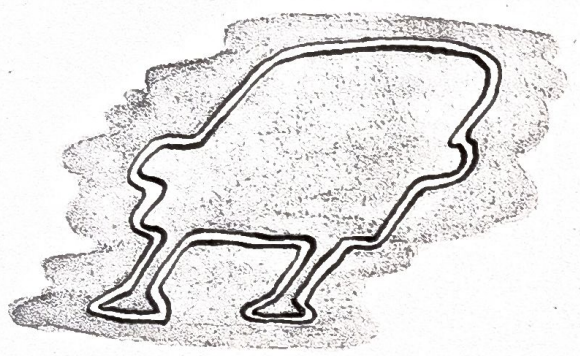

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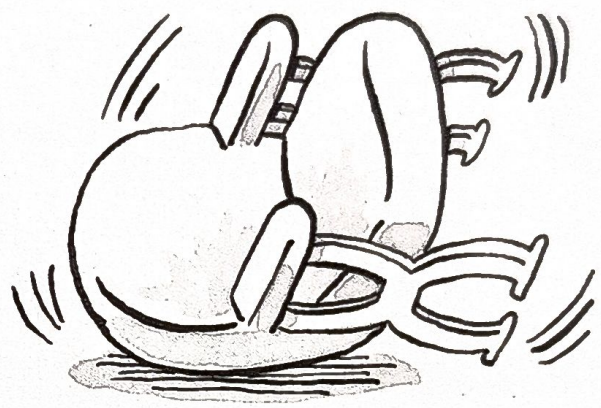

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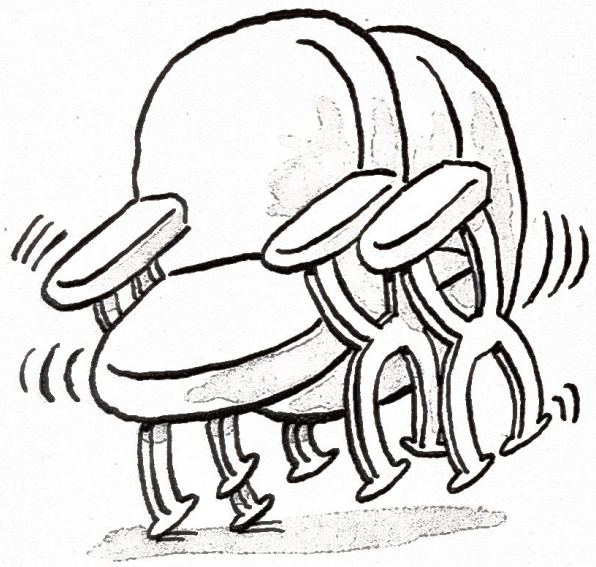

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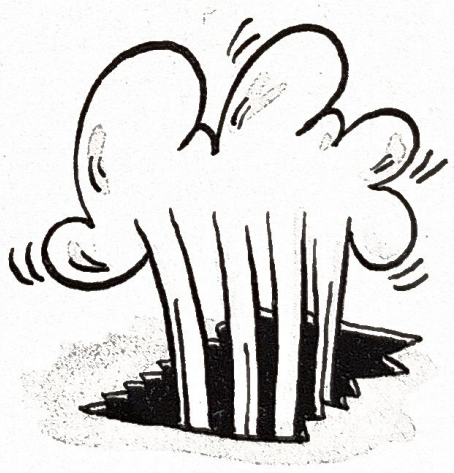

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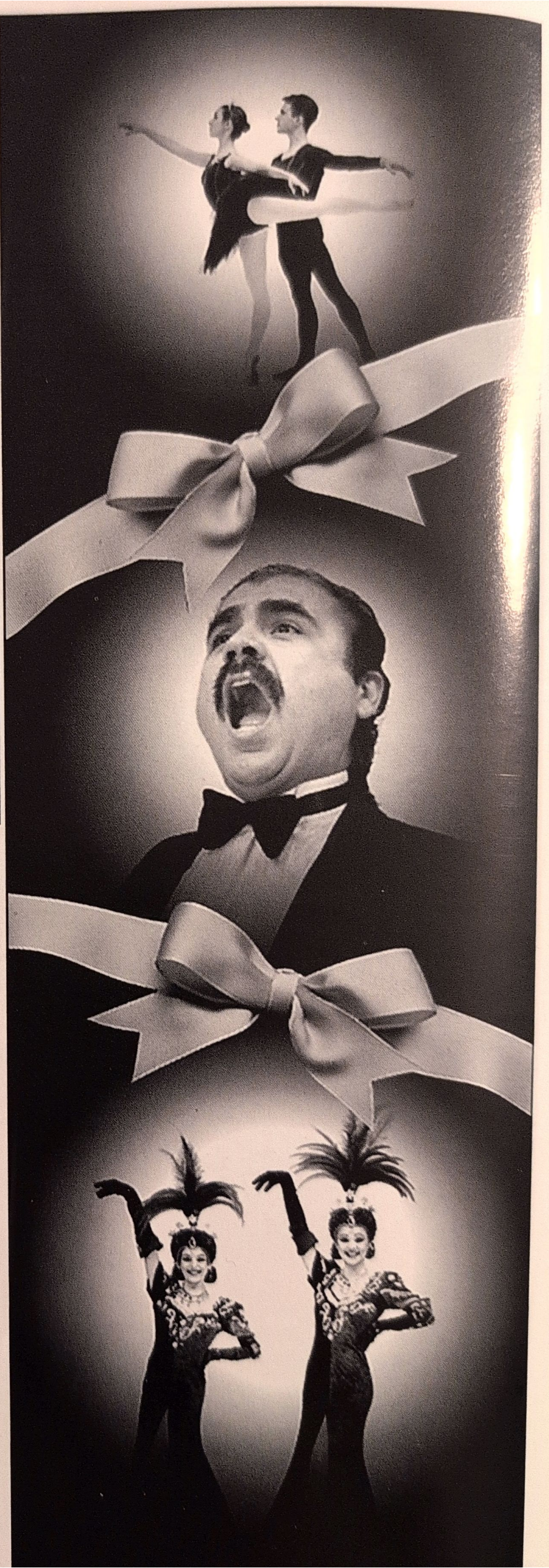

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THEATRE TOKENS

exhibitions

Reginald E Willson

London's Autumn Arts Scene

The arts scene in London this autumn is rich and exceedingly varied, the emphasis generally being on modern art. In this issue of *Theatreprint* we survey the scene beginning at the Royal Academy of Art in Piccadilly where there are currently three important exhibitions on view.

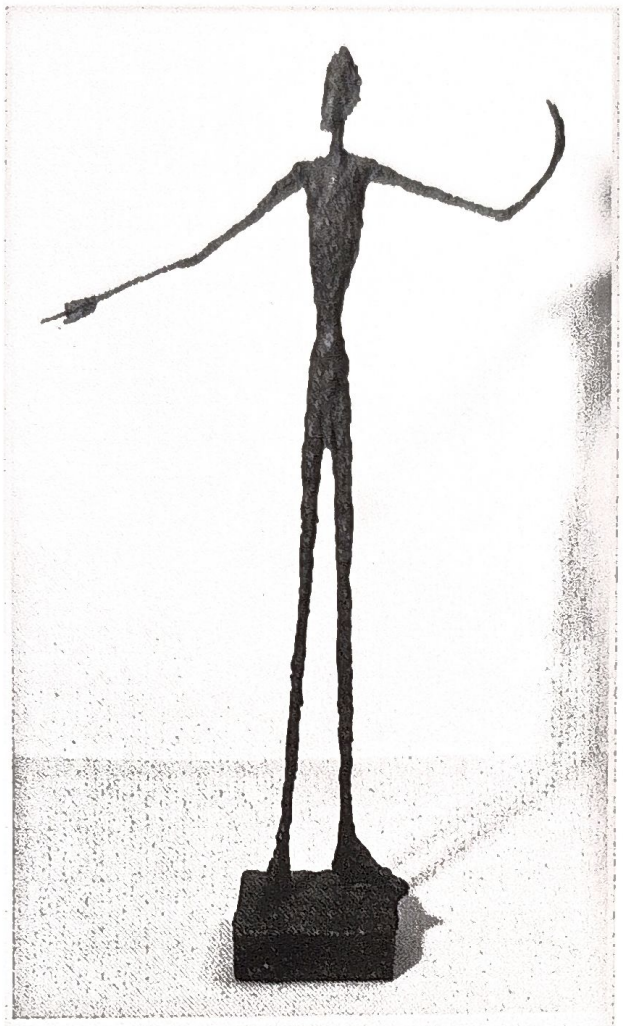
Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) stands alongside Picasso and Matisse as one of the great masters of 20th-century art. Like Picasso, Giacometti created sculpture, paintings and drawings with equal skill. He is best known for his enormously lean, standing, metallic, stiltlike figures which began to appear in the 1940s. Some single, some arranged in groups, these intense looking figures have become among the most recognisable images of the 20th century and they form one of the highlights of the Royal Academy of Arts major autumn exhibition, *Alberto Giacometti 1901-1966* which is on view at Burlington House from 9 October 1996 to 1 January 1997.

The exhibition, which includes over 200 of Giacometti's works surveys his entire career. Loans have come from throughout the world and include many of his greatest and best known sculptures and paintings. These are shown together with several rarely seen sculptures from his surrealist period and a number of previously unrecorded works.

The son of a painter, Giacometti was born in Switzerland in 1901 and displayed a talent for painting and sculpture from a very early age. He moved to Paris in 1922, studying under Bourdelle, the sculptor and former assistant to Rodin. From 1925 he shared a studio with his brother, Diego, and began experimenting with Cubism and abstraction. These early works, some of which are shown in the exhibition, betray Giacometti's interest in African and Oceanic art

After meeting Salvador Dali and Andre Breton in 1930 he joined the Surrealist movement, participating in their activities and exhibitions. He experimented briefly with movable or 'kinetic' sculpture under the influence of Calder and Naum Gabo, but became dissatisfied with his abstract work and began providing more figurative sculpture which led to his expulsion from the Surrealist Group in 1935.

Also in the exhibition are his iconic painted portraits, and portrait busts, for which his brother Diego often modelled. Some 100 drawings complete this fascinating survey of Giacometti's life's work which include animated portrait drawings of his family and contemporaries.



***Man Pointing (1947)* a typical Giacometti figure, one of the exhibits in the Royal Academy exhibition**

Admission is £5.50 full charge; concessions £4.50 and £2.75 for 12-18 years, and £1.00 for 8-11 years. The fully illustrated catalogue costs £19.95.

Two other exhibitions are on view at the Royal Academy in the period running up to Christmas. The first is *Living Bridges* which closes on 18 December. We reviewed this in the *Theatreprint* issue immediately prior to this issue. We now illustrate one of the two prize-winning entries of the competition for the best design for a habitable bridge across the Thames. This is supported by Thames Water Plc. The other exhibition is *From Mantegna to Picasso*, staged in the Sackler Galleries from 9 November 1996 until 19 January 1997. This presents a display of over 100 drawings from the Thaw Collection at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. More of this outstanding exhibition later.

Our illustration is of the entry by Antoine Grumbach which shared the first prize of the Habitable Bridge competition. Thames Water organised the competition to celebrate the river's status as the cleanest metropolitan river in the world. Apart from the benefits the clean-up has brought to the human riverside population, salmon are now returning to the Thames in increasing numbers after an absence of 160 years, and the river is now home to 100 species of fish. By the year 2000 well over a billion pounds will have been spent on sewage treatment works by Thames Water.

There is something particularly romantic about bridges. They were probably man's first attempt at construction. Caves provided shelter but streams had to be crossed and convenient trees were felled to link the two banks. Certainly bridges are a frequent topic of conversation in London this autumn. Apart from the great interest generated by the Royal Academy's exhibition a movement is well advanced to provide a foot bridge across the Thames from St. Paul's Cathedral on the north bank to an area in front of the Tate Gallery's new museum of modern art at Bankside. Known as the Millennium Bridge it is a joint venture of the Corporation of London and Southwark Council. An international competition open to artists and engineers as well as architects attracted a record 220 entries from all over the world. Six entrants have been shortlisted, the winner will be announced in December.

The Millennium Bridge will be of enormous benefit to residents, workers and visitors and will encourage the revival of this long-neglected part of London. It will be a striking new landmark in its own right and create panoramic views of St. Paul's and the Tate Gallery of Modern Art at Bankside.

We now return to the third exhibition at the Royal Academy — *From Mantegna to Picasso* — drawings from the Thaw Collection. Over the past thirty years Eugene and Clare Thaw have assembled one of the most

important collections of master drawings in the United States. It now comprises some 250 works, 100 of them have been lent to the Royal Academy. Mr. Thaw's favoured schools are 16th and 18th-century Italian, 18th and 19th-century French and 20th-century French and American art. He has concentrated on assembling exceptional holdings of Rembrandt, Claude Lorrain, the Tiepolo family, Watteau, Fraqonard, Goya, Delacroix, Géricault, Ingres, Degas and Cézanne.

A significant number of the works on view are finished drawings, many of them coloured, such as Fraqonard's *Interior of a Park* and *The Gardens of the Villa d'Este;* Ingre's *Odalisque with Slave*, or Turner's *The Pass at Faido, St. Gothard.* Colour is also present in Gauguin's delightful *Queen of Beauty*, and Degas's delicate Seated Dancer. Rapid and expressive sketches include Rembrandt's *Four Negroes with Wind Instruments* and Ruben's *Descent from the Cross.*

The exhibition moves into the 20th century with works by Redon, Matisse and Picasso, and includes Picasso's *Portrait of Marie - Thérèse Walter,* the mother of his child Maia. Taken as a whole *From Mantegna to Picasso* provides a history of drawing in all its aspects from the 15th to the 20th centuries.

Entrance to this very interesting exhibition is £5.00 full charge, concessions are from £3.50. The illustrated catalogue is expected to cost £20.00.

Although the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park is at present closed for renovations (the work is expected to take twelve months) a visit between 7 October and 1 December will be well worthwhile for during that period a giant sculpture will occupy the lawn in front of the gallery. The creation of Rasheed Arasen, who arrived in London from Pakistan in 1964, it is oddly named *To Whom it May Concern* and is made entirely of scaffolding. The huge box-like structure has over 1000 modules. Seen from a distance the sculpture, which is some forty feet high and forty feet long takes a crystalline form, whilst closer inspection will reveal a route through the maze of scaffolding.

The Serpentine Gallery intends to maintain public interest during its current closure by adapting the site as a backdrop for a series of specially commissioned sculptures. *To Whom it May Concern* is the fascinating first. The fully renovated and enlarged Serpentine art gallery is expected to re-open in September 1997.

This autumn, until 26 January 1997, the Victoria and Albert Museum is host to a major survey of 75 years of American photography, comprising some 200 landmark photographs from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. American Photography 1890-1965 vividly portrays the vitality and creativity of professional, amateur and artistic photographers. Dynamic images record every aspect of American life, reflecting and defining how the nation saw itself during the three quarters of a century when it rose from near obscurity to world power.

The Garden Bridge **designed by Antoine Grumbach and Associates (France), co-winner with Zaha M. Hadid (UK) in The Thames Water Habitable Bridge competition (in association with the Royal Academy of Arts).**

An interesting aspect of the exhibition is the juxtapositioning of well-known, classic pictures with many remarkable but unfamiliar photographs. The exhibition includes the work of the most important and celebrated photographers of the century, including Alfred Stieglitz, Walter Evans, Dorothea Lange, Edward Weston, Helen Levitt, Paul Strand, Robert Frank and Edward Steichen. The earliest work dating from 1885 is by Jacob Riis and the latest, from 1967, is by Diane Arbus.

The exhibition focuses on two continuous, contrasting and occasionally complementary approaches to the medium – the vernacular and the aesthetic, or applied photography and art photography. The exhibits are organised in alternating groups reflecting the developments within these two extremes.

Towards the end of the 19th century photographs were becoming easier to make and reproduce. The introduction of the first Kodak snapshot camera in 1888 heralded a new era in which photographs could be made almost anywhere, of anything, by anyone. From untutored amateur to specialised professional, the swelling ranks of photographers produced an uncountable multitude of images which recorded the mundane and the remarkable reflecting and defining life in developing America. Thus *American Photography 1890-1965* presents the history of a great nation over its most formative period, as well as detailing a medium which has had such an enormous global impact.

theatrePRINT

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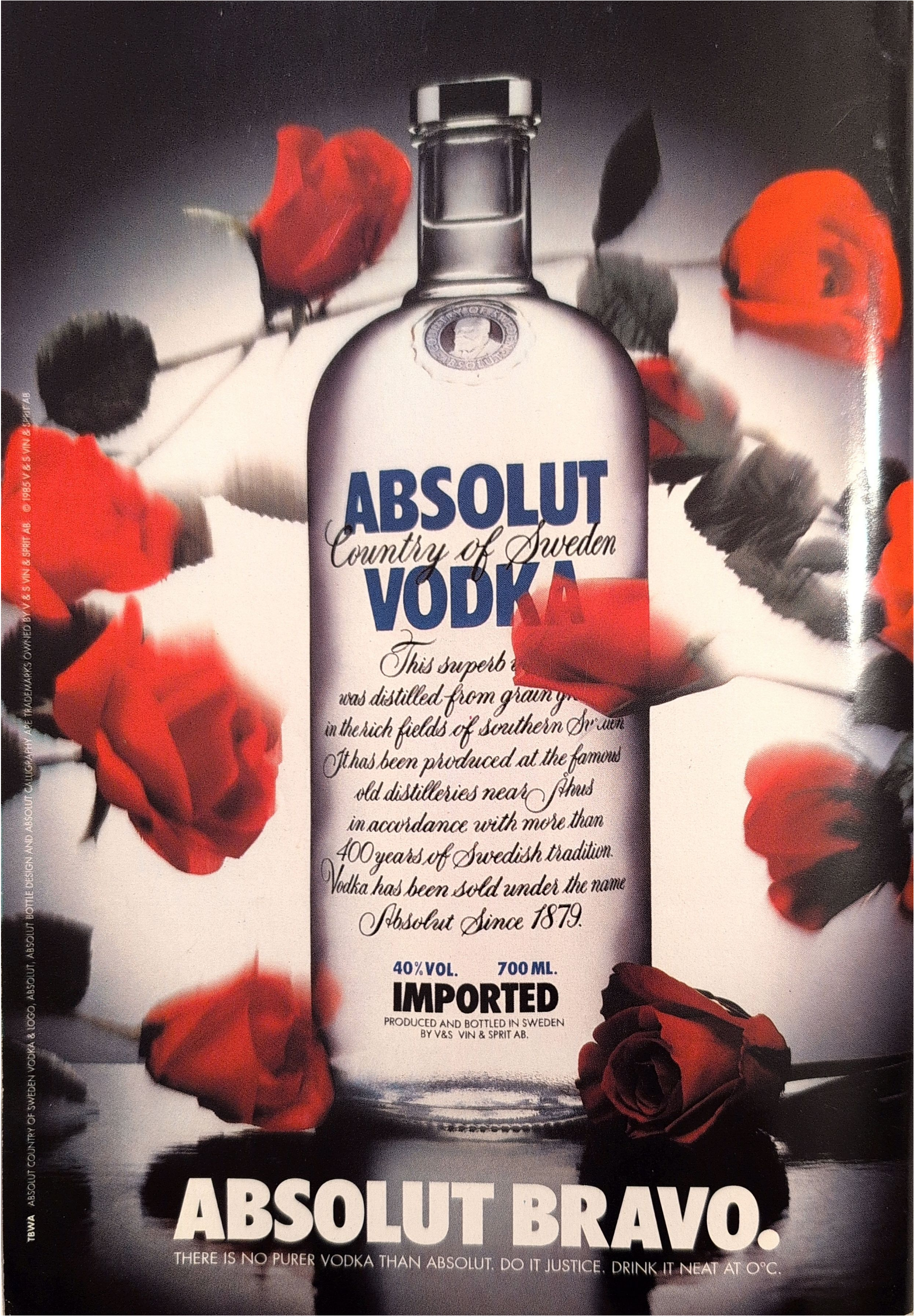
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ABSOLUT BRAVO.
THERE IS NO PURER VODKA THAN ABSOLUT. DO IT JUSTICE. DRINK IT NEAT AT 0°C.
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